

IF I TELL THEM, WILL THEY LISTEN? VOICES OF FORMER TEACHERS

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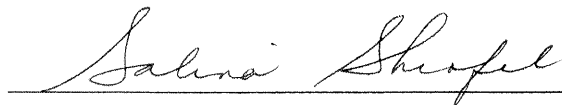
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An Abstract of a Dissertation by

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The Problem. The problem of this qualitative study was to identify reasons teachers may be leaving teaching early in their careers.

Procedures. Twenty former Des Moines Public School (DMPS) Des Moines, Iowa, elementary, secondary, classroom, and special education teachers agreed to participate in this study. Each had been in teacher education programs and coursework after 1986 and taught seven or fewer years between 1991 and 2001. Data records included (a) school district public documents, (b) initial telephone conversations, (c) field notes, (d) transcribed audiotaped interviews, and (e) journal writing. Analysis of data combined methodologies of Strauss (1987) and Clandinin and Connelly (2000): constant comparative and narrative inquiry.

Findings. This analysis indicated the participants' decisions to leave teaching were initiated by disillusionment with teaching. Disillusionment stemmed from unexpected problems in motivating and disciplining students, in giving a fair amount of time and attention to each student, and in overriding their own emotions, particularly the empathetic stress from working with troubled students. For 14 participants, teaching in out-of-field positions intensified the disillusionment. Disillusionment combined with a lack of professional support, a teaching environment of conflict and violence, overwork, and an inadequate salary were other reasons given for leaving as well as teacher burnout. A few teachers entered teaching as a stepping stone to other professions.

Conclusions. First, teachers leave teaching when they are unable to overcome their disillusionment. Second, out-of-field teaching and lack of support intensify the problems. Third, teachers leave when they work in an environment of conflict and violence. Fourth, teachers leave when teaching does not meet or interferes with the needs of themselves or their families, particularly due to workload and salary. Fifth, teachers leave when they experience career burnout. Sixth, teachers leave to fulfill their plan for entering another profession.

Recommendations. The following implications emerged from this study for the DMPS. New teachers need: (a) increased administrative support in the areas of motivation and discipline including no tolerance for abuse toward teachers, (b) individualized induction programs particularly for teachers in out-of-field positions, (c) increased professional support and planning time, (d) increased salary, and (e) increased concern for teachers' stress and well-being. Other implications emerged for teacher education programs. Preservice teachers need increased: (a) exposure to more diverse teaching situations, (b) practice in classroom management strategies, (c) understanding of emotions, workload, politics, and lifestyle associated with teaching.

Acknowledgments

This study is dedicated to each of the thousands of beginning teachers who struggled, often alone, and who eventually gave up their goals to be teachers. I particularly thank the participants in this study who so willingly shared their stories in order that we might help future teachers find teaching to be a fulfilling and satisfying life-long career.

Many people have influenced and supported my own long and satisfying career as a teacher. I appreciate my many years with Dr. Jim Anderson and the facilitators with the Heartland Humanities Program. Facilitating courses and working with hundreds of teachers has been an important part of my professional growth and understanding. I have learned that teaching is always a developmental process and that success is always dependent upon fostering productive relationships with others, including students.

I am very thankful for all of the opportunities and experiences I have had as a teacher in the Des Moines Public Schools. I have become a better teacher and a better person through my association with many energetic and caring faculties beginning at Kurtz Junior High School, and continuing at DM Technical High School, Central Campus, Central Academy, Harding Middle School, and DM East High School. I am particularly appreciative of the support and friendship, the care and concern that I have felt from my East colleagues as I worked through this dissertation challenge. I have also appreciated the help and support of the staff and members of the Des Moines Education Association and the DMPS administration.

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I have always loved stories, and my own story is filled with so many friends who have encouraged and cared for me both here in Iowa and my home in Michigan. Thank you for always being with me. I am especially grateful for a new friend and colleague who helped me so much with putting the final stages of this work together, Lindsay Johnson.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

17% of Iowa teachers leave teaching after one year.

28% of Iowa teachers leave teaching after three years.

33% of all new teachers have either left the teaching profession or are teaching out of Iowa within three years.

Over 40% of Iowa teachers are eligible to retire in the next ten years.

In five years the number of teaching vacancies will double.

(Iowa State Education Association, 2001)

These Iowa teaching statistics are claiming public attention. Newspaper headlines read "Teacher shortage plagues districts" (Roos, 2001, p. 4B). In Iowa's largest newspaper, *The Des Moines Register*, a series of articles, "The State of Education," explains the problem of teacher turnover and the lack of available teachers throughout the state (*The Des Moines Register*, 2001, February 4 through 11). Iowa state officials and other education leaders continue to assess and forecast the number of teachers leaving and the number of

teaching positions required to support Iowa's classrooms. Iowa is joining the nation in recognizing not only the loss of teachers early in their careers and the renewed possibility of teacher shortage, but also their consequences.

"The teacher supply and demand problem has always been a part of education. At various times in the history of our country there have been shortages" (Pipho, 1988, p. 31). In this century both WWI and WWII impacted the availability of teachers. "The First World War had a drastic effect on men's [teacher] training colleges for within a few weeks of the outbreak of the hostilities a third of the men had joined the armed forces" (Edwards, 2000, p. 11).

Consequently, a teacher shortage occurred by the end of the war. During WWII when faced with shortages, "states [took] corrective procedures, such as the issuance of emergency certificates or calling back retired teachers" (Pipho, 1988, p. 31). In the decades that followed, education leaders have tried to keep abreast of the trends in teachers entering and leaving the field. Researchers have paid particular attention to the loss of newer teachers to the profession. "A study published by the United States Office of Education in 1963 indicated that the annual net loss of teachers in the public elementary and secondary schools of the country through teacher dropouts exceeded eight percent" (Corey, 1970, p.

1-2). Since that time, the percentage has risen dramatically and with it increasing concern. Wong and Wong (1991) reported that up to 40% of teachers will leave teaching in their first seven years. A more recent national report indicated that “more than 20% of newly minted teachers leave the profession after four years” (Olson, 2000, p. 13). Other researchers studying teacher attrition among newer teachers have found similar results (Smith, Young, Boe, Choy, & Alsalam, 1997; National Commission on Teaching & America’s Future, 1996). These studies predict that the simultaneous rise in attrition rates of newer teachers, the rise in numbers of retiring teachers, and the rise in population of students may lead to a teacher shortage. The natural turnover of an aging teacher work force has been anticipated as well as the increase in the student population (Pipho, 1988, p. 31). What has not been anticipated is the continuing rise in the percentage of teachers who quit the profession during their first few years. National and state statistics attest to the scope of circumstances that may lead to a teacher shortage. However, concern is related not only to the possibility of a lack of teachers to support classrooms, but also to the serious negative effects from the loss of experienced and developing teachers. This loss negatively impacts the

quality of instruction, student achievement, and virtually all aspects of effective public education.

Continual teacher turnover increases the need for continual recruitment, induction, and replacement of teachers, creating a cycle that seriously affects districts. First, the rising attrition rate is paralleling the rising costs of education and the struggle for funding. Resources continually directed to replace and develop teachers take away from programs and materials needed for schools and their students. Second, teacher turnover among newer teachers comes at a time when there is greater emphasis on raising student achievement. Research documents the relationship between teachers' experience and their effectiveness. "Our scholarship has progressed so that we can now estimate the time it takes to get smart about teaching...about 5 years to proceed from the novice stage of development to the advanced beginner stage to the competent stage of development" (Berliner, 2000, p. 360). Further, research from Texas on 6,000 teachers and their students' test results shows that teachers need approximately seven years of experience to help students gain in standardized tests, often the current measure of student achievement (Lopez, 1995, as cited in Berliner, 2000). "This means that when policies result in high rates of teachers

leaving the profession or a district, when student enrollment growth rates are high (i.e., whenever new teachers are required in large numbers), achievement test performance will be depressed....Apparently,...classroom teaching is too complex a job to be learned very rapidly” (Berliner, 2000, p. 361). When teachers leave early in their careers, the valuable material resources and the invaluable experience of developing teachers leave with them.

When I became aware of the rising percentage of teachers leaving early in their careers and the ramifications of that loss on the nation’s public education system, I became concerned for the schools and students in my own Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) district. These initial feelings of concern motivated my investigation into the percentages of newer teachers leaving my district. Were they similar to the national and state statistics? Through the public records of the State of Iowa and the DMPS School Board, I found that in the 1990s among the approximate 2,000 DMPS classroom and special education teachers, the number of teachers retiring and the number of teachers leaving early in their careers were following the national trend. The possibility of a teacher shortage and the loss of newer teachers was a reality for the DMPS. According to Des Moines Public School Board records, in 1990, 44 teachers retired, 63 teachers resigned,

and 65 took a leave of absence. Comparisons also were relevant in the area of hiring. A total of 104 teachers were hired by DMPS in 1990 while approximately 250 teachers were hired in 1999 (150 of whom were first year teachers) increasing to 300 new hires in the fall of 2000. Other DMPS statistics support the rise in teachers leaving early in their careers; for example, at the end of the 1995-1996 school year, the rate of attrition was 6.5% overall. At the end of the 1997-1998 school year the rate was 9.3%. Of the 184 teachers who left during or after the 1997-1998 school year, 74 of them, or 40%, left with seven or fewer years of experience. Clearly, the DMPS was experiencing problematic conditions similar to national and state situations including the number of newer teachers leaving teaching.

My earlier concern for the Des Moines Public School district and students has increased as I ponder the effects of developing teachers leaving. This loss of experience is coming at a critical time for Des Moines and its school district. Des Moines, the capitol city of Iowa, has always been proud of its rich tradition of excellence in education, but it is experiencing many changes resulting in a recent downward trend in student achievement (Jones & Pilkington, 2001). The city has a population of between 198,000 and 199,000 (McCormick & Beaument, 2001, p.

8A), and the Des Moines Public Schools is one of the largest of Iowa's school districts. It includes six high schools, ten middle schools, forty-one elementary schools, and six special schools and programs serving approximately 32,300 students. The city and the school district are increasing in diversity and increasing in numbers of families of lower socioeconomic status (Jones & Pilkington, 2001). In the student population 27.3% are listed as minority, an increase of about 16.4% since the mid-1970s (Office of Pupil Accounting and Records, DMPS, 1975), and approximately 40-45% of the total number of students receive free or reduced price lunches, a measure often approximating the number of students living in low income families and associated with a lower socioeconomic status. Further, Des Moines has been the destination of many groups of people from other countries. The district's English as a Second Language program has expanded to serve students who speak over thirty different languages. The numbers of students in other Special Education Programs are also growing. Nevertheless, the public is demanding improvement in the quality of instruction and in student achievement (Jones & Pilkington, 2001). It is imperative that the DMPS find ways to recruit and retain teachers,

who through experience can develop the expertise needed to meet these educational challenges.

Statement of the Problem

The Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) is facing a difficult situation. First, at the same time it is under pressure to increase student achievement in a changing student body, it is losing not only the experience of career teachers to retirement, but also the developing newer teachers just as they are gaining the experience to affect student achievement. Second, resources that should be directed to student materials and programs must instead be directed to recruitment, induction, and the initial development of new teachers. If the attrition rate of newer teachers continues to rise, these resources available for teaching and learning will continue to be drained from the district. The rising attrition rate among teachers in the first years of their careers results in the continuing problem of a tremendous loss in experience and in resources for the students and the Des Moines Public Schools.

Purpose of the Study

This study addresses the issue of teachers leaving teaching early in their careers from one school district, the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), Des

Moines, Iowa. Its purpose is to explore, through a qualitative research design, the experiences of former DMPS teachers as they tell their stories of becoming teachers, teaching, and their reasons for leaving their profession. This study focuses particularly on former teachers who left between the years 1990 and 2000 with seven or fewer years of teaching. My goal for this research is to accumulate and explore information which may “lead to understanding or explanation” of the experiences influencing newer teachers to leave the DMPS in hopes of stemming the rising rate of attrition (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 227).

Rationale for Choosing a Qualitative Study

Surveys and other studies have been conducted both within states and throughout the nation to ascertain reasons for teachers leaving. These studies have been helpful at the federal and state levels as policies and programs are developed to address many of the larger issues related to teacher attrition such as compensation, licensing, and school funding. But national and state initiatives are not enough. “Although the formation of the Republic placed education under state authority, defacto powers moved to local school boards which gained authority over most facets of the schools” (Lortie, 1975, p. 3). Today, public school teachers are recruited, hired, and retained by local school boards.

Teachers work in specific schools under specific administrators. When teachers leave teaching, they leave specific schools, specific administrations, and specific school districts. While the practical authority structure of the education system gives power at the local level to affect teacher attrition and enhance retention, few studies of teachers leaving teaching have been conducted in specific school districts. Local school boards and administrations must search within their own districts for greater understanding of reasons for teachers leaving in order to find solutions for retention.

Pipho (1988) recognized the need for this information: "An understanding of the real extent of the teacher shortage problem will depend on more extensive data gathered from individual teachers, individual schools, and school districts" (p. 34). Local school boards need information specific to their own conditions to make informed decisions in their efforts to reduce attrition and increase retention. This information can only be gained through investigating former teachers' experiences and the decision processes that lead them to quitting the profession.

In much of the writing on teaching and teachers' work, teachers' voices have either been curiously absent, or been used as mere echoes for preferred and presumed theories of educational researchers. Teachers'

voices, though, have their own validity and assertiveness which can and should lead to questioning, modification and abandonment of those theories wherever warranted. (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 4)

My rationale for choosing a qualitative study rests on the intent of qualitative research design as outlined in Creswell (1998): to “explore a social or human problem...[and]...build a complex, holistic picture, analyzing words, reporting detailed views of informants,” the former teachers in this study (p. 15). I wanted to listen to the experiences, thoughts, and feelings of former DMPS teachers, giving voice and details of their stories. A major tenet of qualitative research explained by Merriam (1998) is that the researcher as “the data collection instrument” must be “sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data...especially because interviewing, observing, and analyzing are activities central” to the study (p. 1-2). I wanted to talk and listen to teachers and together uncover information that might positively impact the formulation of policies and practices of the DMPS in relation to hiring, placing, developing, and retaining teachers. My hope is that results of this study may have implications for teacher education programs, human resources, staff development, and mentoring programs locally, regionally, and nationally.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to uncover the underlying causes that may influence Des Moines Public School (DMPS) teachers to leave the profession early in their careers. Therefore, my research questions include the following:

1. What reasons do former DMPS teachers give for leaving the teaching profession?
2. What experiences converged to influence their decisions to leave their profession?

Research Procedures

I chose a qualitative research design to study the experiences of former teachers and the reasons they left public school teaching particularly from the Des Moines Public School (DMPS) district. In a qualitative design, the researcher personally interacts with the participants in a study, and I wanted to listen to the stories of the experiences of these former teachers, to explore the meaning they attached to them, and together come to a greater understanding of why newer teachers might be leaving. As a qualitative researcher I was “interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have” (Merriam, 1998, p. 6).

Further, this design provided a way to attempt to build “abstractions, concepts, hypotheses or theories” based on their experiences (p. 7).

Initially, I selected the grounded theory methodology to guide the details of the study. An important reason for my choice is based on the respect it is given in qualitative research. Its rigor gives weight to the information generated because theories developed are “‘grounded’ in data from the field” (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). “Grounded theory methodology emphasizes the need for developing many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of the variation that characterizes the central phenomenon studied” (Strauss, 1987, p. 7). In following this precept to include a wide variety of experiences, I interviewed twenty participants who covered a broad range of personal and teaching characteristics. Next, grounded theory methodology calls for the researcher to develop categories as information emerges from the participants’ stories of their experiences and to continue to compare and contrast emerging information throughout the data collection process. This process is commonly called the “constant comparative method of data analysis” and leads to a saturation of information which is the basis for creating patterns and themes which in turn become the basis of a proposed theory (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). As I gathered

information—in this case through the stories of the participants—I also became interested in the concept of *story* as a method in itself. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain the importance of story: “narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience” (p. 20). In explaining the methodology of narrative inquiry, they focus on the idea that “stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 415). As I read and reread the data, I began to merge the grounded theory categories into the “patterns, narrative threads, tensions, and themes” expected in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 417). I believe choosing a qualitative study and combining these methodologies will generate useful information for the DMPS district.

Participants

The participants in this qualitative study were twenty former elementary and secondary classroom and special education teachers of the Des Moines Public School District (DMPS), Des Moines, Iowa. To acquire possible participants, I found the names of teachers who had resigned over the past ten years in the minutes of the DMPS school board meetings. I used a telephone

protocol to screen many of these former teachers to ascertain whether or not they met the following criteria: He or she had left teaching between the 1990-1991 school year and the 2000-2001 school year with seven or fewer years of teaching based on an earlier study that reported the median life of teachers nationally was approximately seven years (Wong and Wong, 1991). I restricted the selection to the most recent decade because the DMPS has undergone changes such as increased diversity and increased numbers of families in lower socioeconomic situations. Teachers' experiences in earlier decades and reasons for leaving may not be representative of experiences of teachers during the past ten years. As I talked with former teachers, I made an attempt to select people who were diverse in their teaching experiences, grade level, subject matter, special or regular education, and also diverse in gender, age, years of teaching, and so forth. Through the screening process of the approximately seventy former teachers with whom I was able to talk, twenty people met these criteria and agreed to be a part of this study.

Data sources

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the use of differing kinds of "records, normally called data...in order to represent aspects of field experience"

(p. 85). I considered the following data sources as “field texts” (p. 92): (a) school district documents; (b) initial conversations with approximately 70 former teachers; (c) field notes and my personal journals “full of details and moments of...inquiry lives in the field” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104); (d) twenty transcribed audiotaped in-depth personal interviews situating me in the teachers’ stories; and (e) a participant’s journal writings.

Data analysis

Creswell (1998) describes the method of analyzing data in a qualitative study as a “spiral image....The researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles” (p. 142). These analytic circles begin during the process of coding, reading the various field texts and beginning to discover and identify categories of information. To continue this brief introduction to the analysis used in this study, I followed the guidelines considered necessary in a grounded theory study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss, 1987). These included open coding, the initial reading of transcripts and other field texts seeking categories through the constant comparative method as noted earlier. I then moved through the next phases of this method, axial and selective coding procedures, reading and rereading to capture more specific information generated around the categories.

As indicated earlier in this chapter, I was also mindful of the narrative inquiry methods of Clandinin and Connelly (2000). They emphasize the need to analyze the stories of the experiences revealed in the texts within a “three dimensional inquiry space” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 54). They explain:

Methods for the study of personal experience are simultaneously focused in four directions: inward and outward, backward and forward. By inward we mean the internal conditions of feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions, and so on. By outward we mean existential conditions...environment....By backward and forward we are referring to temporality, past, present, and future. (Clandinin & Connelly, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 417)

As I moved through these circles of analysis as outlined in both grounded theory and narrative inquiry, *narrative threads* emerged from the stories of participants' experiences. These became the themes, giving greater understanding of the teachers leaving early in their careers. Trustworthiness of the findings was established through triangulation of the listed data sources.

Significance of the Study

The most important reason for doing this study is the need to keep experienced teachers in the DMPS as it faces the challenges of a growing and changing population. Earlier in this chapter, I described these changes as well as stated the pressures the schools are undergoing to increase student achievement. I also reviewed literature showing the relationship between the experience of classroom teachers and student achievement. Over the years thousands of career teachers in the DMPS have worked in their classrooms, on committees, and in many other capacities to build student achievement and along with that, a strong school district. To continue to increase our students' achievements and to strengthen our schools, hundreds of new teachers must be helped to develop productive and satisfying careers. Only through a better understanding of the experiences of newer teachers which might be leading them to abandon their careers will we be able to help them stay.

There is also personal significance for this study. I am concerned for the thousands of people who dream of becoming a teacher, who struggle to achieve their dream only to find they cannot continue in their chosen career. I was one of those people. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain that "narrative inquiry

characteristically begins with the researcher's autobiographically oriented narrative associated with the research...question" (p. 41). I once was a former teacher. At the end of my first year of teaching, I resigned. My assignment had been to teach the standard eighth and ninth grade English and literature course work in a central city school in Michigan. However, my students were far below grade level in reading, and many who spoke both English and Spanish could neither read nor write in either. Consequently, classroom management was a disaster. It was a long, frustrating, exhausting, defeating year. I remember the disheartening feeling realizing that I had spent over seven years going to college part-time to earn a teaching certificate in order to fulfill my goal of becoming a middle school teacher, and yet, had failed to achieve that goal. I had decided I was not meant to be a teacher. I thought I was inadequate and unable to help students learn. At the time, I did not realize that so much of those first developing years are just that: learning to learn how to help students learn. But no one talked to me. No one encouraged me to stay nor even asked why I was leaving, and so I assumed my negative self-evaluation was reciprocated by the administration and my colleagues.

During the next few years, I decided to take another approach to teaching and learning. I earned a Master's degree in Educational Psychology, and after moving to Iowa, I decided to again attempt a teaching career. I was hired by the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), and I taught three years before deciding once again that being a teacher was not for me. Adding to my daily struggles of motivating eighth grade remedial reading students and the after hours workload required was my second full time job as a wife and a mother of four growing children. I was overwhelmed. An additional factor was my frustration with what my colleagues and I believed to be a nonsupportive administration of the school where I was assigned. But again, no one asked why I was leaving or encouraged me to stay. And again, I simply felt I was a failure as a teacher.

A semester later, however, my circumstances changed, and I needed to assume greater responsibility for the financial security of my family. In trepidation, I called the Des Moines Public Schools to seek another teaching position as it was my only real source for a career and income. Fortunately and thankfully, they did need an English teacher, and I happened to be placed in a teaching position that corresponded to my knowledge, skills, and most

importantly my philosophy of education. My career has now spanned twenty-six consecutive, fulfilling years.

When I learned of the numbers of teachers quitting after their first year or first few years, I became concerned that they might be experiencing situations similar to my earlier experiences. Was anyone asking them why they were leaving or encouraging them to stay? Was anyone talking with them, suggesting other possible placements for which they might be better suited? Were these teachers leaving because they felt inadequate? Overwhelmed? Were these teachers being helped to see that the first few years in teaching are the most difficult and these negative, inadequate feelings are often natural? I had spent several years harboring feelings of failure which might have been alleviated if someone had talked with me, asked those questions, and encouraged me to stay and continue my development as a teacher. After learning that the DMPS was not conducting exit interviews either formally or informally at that time, I felt it was important to talk with these former teachers and ask these questions. Because of my personal experiences, both as a former teacher and a career DMPS teacher, I hope this study will aid people who are new in the profession to find fulfillment in

teaching and that their development into competent, experienced teachers will help DMPS continue to provide a strong educational base for its students.

Definition of Terms

For this study, the terms are defined as follows:

Classroom teacher A teacher who facilitates learning in a normal school

classroom with the general population of students;

Special Education teacher A teacher who works with special education students

in one on one situations, commonly referred to as a *resource teacher* and who

helps with regular class work, or a teacher who works with small groups of

special education students in a *self-contained* classroom, meaning that the

students spend an extended period of time with that teacher who covers a variety

of subjects.

Delimitations of the Study

1. Participants in this study were twenty former classroom and special education teachers who left teaching from the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) with seven or fewer years of teaching during the 1990s.
2. I conducted this study over a two year period.

3. The main source of data collection was audiotaped semi-structured interviews.
4. As a teacher in the DMPS, I am aware of the cautions of doing research in my own area (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Overview of the Study

In this chapter, I have presented the background for the study, stated the problem, given its purpose, and listed the specific research questions. A brief rationale for the study's design and methodology was explained followed by a description of the participants and a summary of the research procedures. I closed the chapter with sections on what I believe to be the significance of the study both for the Des Moines Public Schools and its students, and also for myself and newer teachers. Other sections of this chapter detail the study's delimitations and definitions of relevant terms. In *Narrative Inquiry* (2000) Clandinin and Connelly suggest the use of metaphor in telling the story of qualitative research. Chapter 2 is the review of literature, and I begin with the metaphor of *walking the tracks*, investigating the work that has been laid out previously in search of the choices and experiences of people who become teachers only to leave the profession within the first few years of teaching. In

Chapter 3, I explain more fully the design, methodology, and the research procedures used for the study. I return to the use of metaphor in Chapter 4. The findings are reported in narrative form, and I have chosen the Drake Relays' Steeplechase event as analogous to the stories of the participants. Chapter 5 is both a discussion and synthesis of the findings identified in Chapters 2 and 4, resulting in conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter presents research on public education and the careers of teachers. As I began, I thought of *walking the tracks* with my father. He was a railroader, and as his career progressed, he became the Trainmaster and later the Superintendent of a Michigan region for the Pennsylvania Railroad. He was responsible for ensuring that trains moved as expected from Point A to Point B. Derailment was a household word; and, my father was a diligent investigator, always searching for a cause. He was also concerned with prevention. We spent many Sunday afternoons *walking the tracks*, as he took the role of a Trackman, beginning at a Point A, looking for any splits in the rails that might cause a train to go off the tracks. When I think of this study of teachers leaving early in their careers, my mind flashes *derailment*. Most of these teachers began at Point A, choosing to become teachers and expecting to move to Point B, a fulfilling teaching career. In investigating the literature regarding teacher turnover, I felt I was taking the role of Trackman and walking the tracks, searching through the experiences of teachers to learn the reasons that might be preventing them from

reaching Point B.

The review of literature begins with *Becoming Teachers*, an examination of motivations and general characteristics of those who become teachers. The starting point is a historical perspective on the beginning of public school teaching and teachers. It continues with the development of the profession, including the influence and domination of women as teachers in the 19th century and the characteristics and motivations of teachers in the 20th century.

The rest of the chapter deals with the issues surrounding teachers leaving the profession. These include research into the reasons teachers give for leaving, sources of dissatisfaction, and the problems encountered by beginning teachers. The chapter continues with exploration into the theories of adult development, life cycles, and career patterns as they interact with the stages of a teaching career. More specific focus is then aimed at examining the deeper causes for teachers leaving: disillusionment and the obstacles to teaching, unreasonable demands of the workload and time, the lack of professional support and respect, and the issues related to salary and prestige. Following this examination is a review of the emotional impact of teaching on teachers including types of emotions, types of stress, and symptoms of career burnout. The chapter

concludes with some research on teacher preparation programs and induction programs which may reduce teacher attrition. A summary closes the chapter.

Becoming Teachers

"Teachers don't just have jobs. They have personal lives as well...."

Understanding the teacher means understanding the person the teacher is."

(Hargreaves as cited in Huberman, 1993, p. vii)

Historical perspective

Several 20th century authors have attempted to describe the development of public education, public school teaching, and public school teachers from Colonial America through the first centuries of the United States (Elsbree, 1939; Hoffman, 1981; Lortie, 1975; Sugg, 1978; Waller, 1965; Warren, 1989). These descriptions reflect the growth of the country as the population expanded from East to West, North to South. In an attempt to summarize their descriptions, I want to acknowledge some limitations of this brief review. The descriptions of early teachers and schools depict the general education practices in the Northeastern and other more populated, developing cities. Teachers' social class and other characteristics may have been different in the South, rural, Midwest, and far Western parts of the country as settlers arrived. The education system of

Native American Nations is, likewise, not described here.

In beginning this section with a brief history, I am following the wisdom of Warren (1989) who states: "The evidence suggests that educational reformers... improve their chances of success when they devise goals and plans in concert with teachers and when they have the experience of history at their disposal" (p. 1). Warren (1989) continues to support the role of history in understanding today's issues in his chapter "Who Became Teachers." He believes that "scrutinizing the social characteristics of teachers in the past, and identifying important related patterns of development in the nations' teaching force, can help both to underscore the significance of these shifts and to anticipate their impact on the decades ahead" (p. 9). Research into teaching over the past three centuries has documented two major characteristics of a teaching career: low salary and low status. "The concept of a golden age in the past is untenable. Throughout most of our history, teachers have been young and poorly paid. They came in and out of the occupation as though they were passing through a revolving door" (Tyack as cited in Warren, 1989, p. 408). As factors which contribute to teacher attrition today, it is helpful to have some understanding of how these entwined factors—low salary and low status earned by young adults in

steppingstone positions—became publicly acceptable as characteristic of teaching.

Early public schools and early teachers.

“During the first century and a half of Europeanized life on the American Continent,” education was a responsibility of the family and/or community (Lortie, 1975, p. 2). Families or small communities hired teachers who were most probably “white and male, largely middle-class and young, and often {though not always} well-educated—at least by seventeenth and eighteenth-century standards” (Warren, 1989, p. 11). Often schools held only very short terms -- a few weeks in the winter. During this early time period, teaching was generally not thought of as a full-time or long-term career.

Teaching was often combined with one or more other jobs, in order to compliment their income. Many young men appear to have used teaching as a way to support themselves while preparing for other careers...a step on the road to high status occupations. (Warren, 1989, p. 14)

From these early observations of American teachers, three facts seem to have led the way to acceptance of teaching as a lower paid, lower status, temporary position: Teaching was part-time work conducted by educated young men on

their way to a more worthy profession. Women were not yet generally afforded the education required to be teachers early in colonial times. As young women became educated, however, opening Dame schools toward the end of the 18th century and slowly moving into the teaching profession, their low status, based on gender, served to strengthen the tradition of low status and low pay for teachers overall. This continued into the 1800s as the teaching profession became feminized, switching from a male dominated occupation to a female dominated one (Warren, 1989).

The feminization of teaching.

At the beginning of the 19th century, one in ten teachers was a woman, but by 1920, of 657,000 public school teachers, 86% were women, and nearly 100% of elementary teachers were women (Hoffman, 1981, p. XIV). To explain in detail the intricate connections which led to such a vast societal and institutional change within little more than a hundred years is not warranted here.

Nevertheless, in general, there were several major developments which supported the establishment of a public education system and at the same time, the accessibility and availability of teaching positions for women: expansion of the population and the national boundaries, a reduction of the powerful influence

of the Calvinist religion on American society, the industrial revolution creating growth in both business and government, and the rise of large urban areas.

“Professional educators, concerned with the nation’s future, said that if citizens were to respond to economic forces ‘modernizing’ American society, they would need increasingly complex knowledge [and] formation of character and conscience” (Hoffman, 1981, p. XIV). These ideas became some of the philosophical underpinnings of the public school system.

Through the 19th century, not only were thousands of schools and classrooms established to meet this need for an educated public, but also women came to be seen as better suited than men as teachers. Women were “exalted figures, custodians of American character whose mission it was to discipline and inspire the young” (Hoffman, 1981, p. 8). This idea was promoted by several public and religious leaders of the time. Among them was Horace Bushnell, a Calvinist minister, credited with “dignifying the function of the mother in the home and in rationalizing the extension of those functions to the schools, where women, whether actually mothers or not, might be regarded as divinely called to teach” (Sugg, 1978, p. 34). Through his preaching and writing, Bushnell also introduced the image of the self-sacrificing mother and teacher. This

domestic education movement was coordinated in time with Horace Mann's promotion of a less authoritarian method of teaching. Traditionally, the schoolmaster's practice was to use force when needed in order to contain and subdue the evil nature of man when witnessed in the school children. Religious institutions, perhaps fed by the transcendentalist movement which was popular at the time, were changing the beliefs about the nature of man. Children were born to be nurtured, and as Catherine Beecher, a woman's activist exclaimed, "The educating of children, that is the true and noble profession of a woman—that is what is worthy of the noblest powers and affections of the noblest minds" (Beecher as cited in Hoffman, 1981, p. 4). Through the 1820s and 1830s, the progressive political and social institutions were the impetus for and support of the common public schools emerging into a free, public elementary education system designed for all children. The idea was borne that upward mobility could be gained through a more formal education. The rationale was "that free universal elementary education would enable the poorer classes to govern themselves and tend to decrease" the need for increased governmental agencies or control (Sugg, 1978, p. 17). Initially, a teacher in these schools was only required to have "little more than an elementary education herself" which made it

possible for more and more women to become teachers, since girls were now going to school (p. 17). Later, Horace Mann and his colleagues introduced the Normal School concept, and the first professional education for teachers began in Lexington, Massachusetts in 1839. Graduates were called Normalites, and through the next few decades thousands of women entered newly created teacher colleges, graduated, and became teachers.

At the same time that more women were choosing teaching and more schools and teaching positions were being created, fewer men were choosing the profession, perhaps in part because of a negative stereotype drawn by Washington Irving, a popular American writer, in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." The story was published in *The Sketch Book* (1819-1820/1978) and the main character was an effeminate, silly caricature of a male teacher named Ichabod Crane. This popular story may have sealed the fate of teaching as a profession not appropriate for strong, young virulent men. The "schoolmaster as a type" became associated with the negative characteristics of "transience shading into vagrancy, incompetence, eccentricity, and effeminacy (Warren, 1989, p. 39). Men who did choose teaching after the role became associated with women were often "the butt of the community's ridicule and hostility" (p. 39).

The Civil War was “the last and hardest blow dealt to male teachers” (Elsbree, 1939, p. 206). Throughout the states, men were going off to war leaving even more openings for women. For example, in Iowa women teachers outnumbered men in 1962 “when [men] were needed to fill up the ranks of Iowa regiments” (Turner as cited in Elsbree, 1939, p. 206). After the Civil War, many more lucrative and higher status positions were available for men, including education administration and high school and university teaching, while women continued to dominate the elementary teaching force, the largest sector of public schooling into the 20th century.

Who were these young women and why were they choosing teaching? As young men had in earlier times, young women chose teaching for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was as a steppingstone, but in this case, it was toward marriage. These young teachers were often from the lower or middle classes and teaching was preferred over other available work for women. In her study of the early women teachers’ writings, Hoffman (1981) concludes that teaching

was genteel, paid reasonably well, and required little special skill or equipment. In the second half of the [19th] century and beyond, it also

allowed a woman to travel, to live independently, or in the company of other women, and to attain economic security and a modest social status.

(p. vii)

While not the motivations that Bushnell, Mann, and other 19th century activists might have interpreted as women's sacrificial and nurturing instincts, Hoffman (1981) goes on to include that some women did pursue teaching "in order to foster social, political, or spiritual change: [to foster] collective action [among the young] for temperance, for racial equality, for conversion to Christianity" (p. viii).

Though women, in many ways, benefited from having access to careers in teaching, the feminization of teaching, the domination of the career by women, unfortunately, had substantial negative consequences on the development of teaching as a profession. The loss of men and "the common image of teaching as 'women's work' resulted in its demotion to a second rate profession...not equal [to] law, medicine, theology, or even the management of education" (Hoffman, 1981, p. 15). The lower status of women and the transience of women who often "withdrew after a few years of service to be married," resulted in lower salaries, "reduced political effectiveness, slowed up educational reforms, and

impeded the improvement of professional welfare" (Elsbree, 1939, p. 207).

The characteristics and motivations of 20th century teachers.

Some changes in the balance of women to men began to occur after a Michigan Supreme Court ruling in 1874 legalized tax levies to support public high schools as well as elementary schools. Communities began to include high schools as part of their public school systems, making more positions available for both men and women. This growth of public education in the first decades of the 20th century is witnessed in these statistics: In 1900, less than 9% of young people entered high school and only 6% graduated. By 1920, 60% of young people were continuing after elementary school (Toch, 1991, p. 42). Information about early 20th century teachers is available from records of the US Bureau of Census. Figures show that during this time period, women comprised more than 70% of elementary teachers while at the high school level, the numbers of men and women were about equal. Social characteristics of teachers were also gleaned from the census reports during these early decades. Keeping in mind regional differences and a great variance in extremely rural areas, the majority of teachers continued to be young and racially of European descent although immigrants were also entering teaching. More than half of the men and about

40% of the women entering teaching were from the more wealthy farming families. In general, other teachers came from families where fathers were employed in middle class positions. Records at this time show that African American teachers constituted 5% of teachers overall, generally teaching in the South's segregated schools (Warren, 1989).

By the 1950s, public education systems were becoming standardized across the states. The length of the school year, requirements for graduation, and requirements for teachers were similar throughout the regions. Teaching had become mainly a middle class profession as 60% of teachers were from middle class families, with a smaller number from working class backgrounds. Although the women continued to significantly dominate the profession, in the lower grades in particular, men began again to enter teaching as the GI Bill enabled them to earn a college degree, gain a profession, and some social mobility. Racially, only 7% of teachers were African American, though in the South, 20% of the teaching force was African American, and the feminization of teaching continued in this population also: Women outnumbered the men four to one (Warren, 1989). An interesting trend, however, was noted after WWII, as researchers, worried about the coming surge in school age children, began to

pay more attention to the characteristics of the teaching force. Women who had entered teaching in their twenties to become housewives and mothers were now returning to teaching and planning to continue in life-long teaching careers.

These women and the men who were also entering the profession a little later in their lives began to stabilize the teaching force. Teaching was “no longer...a middle passage between adolescence and marriage. Rather...the profession entered a new era of commitment to making teaching a more viable career option for the educated middle class” (Warren, 1989, p. 38).

Research during this time period also includes studies of why people were entering teaching. One of the most comprehensive analyses of peoples’ motivations for entering teaching in the middle decades of the 20th century was made by Lortie and reported in his book *Schoolteacher* (1975). He used the National Education Association’s survey of approximately 2,300 teachers which was conducted in the 1960s and early 1970s in combination with his own indepth-interview study of 94 teachers in five school districts surrounding Boston. Through his thoughtful investigation, he uncovered many reasons that teachers gave for entering the field, but emphasized five reasons in particular. First, 34% of both women and men respondents cited the opportunity to work with young

people as a main attraction for teaching. Second, 29% of women and 25% of men cited their desire to perform a service as an attraction. Other main attractors included (a) enjoyment of the school environment and/or subject matter and a desire to continue after concluding their normal school years; (b) appreciation of the benefits of teaching such as salary, status, and employment security; and (c) appreciation of the benefits of teaching in terms of flexibility in work schedules, leaving time for family and other pursuits. Within each of these reasons there are some differences between men and women and between elementary and secondary teachers. The most notable differences between men and women are the effects of salary and status. "It is evident that men and women will feel that they sacrificed different levels of income (and prestige) in order to teach" (p. 34). Because of the lower salary and status of women in society, the money and status accorded women teachers are relatively high. However, men who choose to teach do give up both the salary and status associated with business and other professions.

Along with these five main attractors, several other motivations for choosing teaching were also revealed through Lortie's 1975 study. Some teachers entered the profession because other family members were teachers,

and they were continuing a family tradition. Some teachers entered the field based on the influence of other people who believed that they had the skills and characteristics to enable them to be successful teachers. Other teachers had entered the field after identifying strongly with their own teachers. In examining the survey responses and responses of his interviewed participants, Lortie (1975) found that not all teachers had intentionally and freely chosen teaching, but rather had become teachers because of situations that prevented them from choosing other work. In the Five Towns study, "about a third...of the teachers reported that they had wanted to go into another line of work but were unable to do so because of external constraints" (p. 49). Most people were prevented from other choices because of a lack of money for the education required. Other examples were of women who were often guided into teaching by their own families, or who chose to marry, abandoning their own ambitions, becoming teachers to support the professional choices of their husbands.

Research has continued into the make-up of the teaching force and the motivations of later 20th century teachers (Berliner, 2000; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Haggstrom, Darling-Hammond, & Grissmer, 1988; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Huberman, 1993; Huling-Austin, 1989). Estimated

projections signaling the possibility of a teacher shortage have prompted both private and government studies. Moreover, teachers and the teaching profession have become the subjects of research in many other countries, and findings reflect not only similarities with results in the United States, but together may indicate universal and professional motivations of the majority of teachers (Brown, 1992; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Huberman, 1993).

One example is an extensive study of 156 secondary teachers in Switzerland reported by Huberman (1993) in *The Lives of Teachers*. Approximately 32% gave their primary motivation as the desire to work with young people, a similar result to Lortie's 1975 findings. Some of the other motivations which paralleled Lortie's study included an appreciation of the subject matter as well as the financial benefits, working conditions, and flexibility related to personal control of time and schedules. As in the case of Lortie's respondents, Huberman also found that despite the positive motivations of 63% of the teachers in the study, approximately 25% indicated that becoming a teacher was "for lack of something better or by process of elimination (22%) or 'sinking into it:' tentative commitment, then the inability to change (3%)" (Huberman, 1993, p. 121).

A 1992 study of Caribbean first year teachers reported findings of teacher motivations comparable to both Lortie's and Huberman's. Two hundred seventy-eight teachers, randomly selected from schools on seven Caribbean islands, were given questionnaires designed to discover their reasons for choosing teaching. The dominant motivations were the love for the teaching profession and wanting to help children. In this study less than 18% of the respondents indicated that teaching was a fall-back choice (Brown, 1992).

Finally, returning to teachers in the United States, a survey of the motivations of 409 education majors in a large Midwestern university was reported in a 2001 study (Nelson, Garmon, & Davis). These students cited working with young people as their most important reason for entering teaching. This further supports the earlier national findings as well as the international findings. This reason was followed by having teachers as role models and wanting to make a difference (Nelson et al., 2001). If there were less than positive reasons for entering teaching, they were not reported in this study.

Summary of becoming teachers

To conclude this section regarding the motivations and general characteristics of people who have entered teaching, it is clear that change has

occurred over time. In the early years of education in this country, men entered teaching as a steppingstone to other, higher status careers. As women entered, they, too, used teaching as a steppingstone, but as a step toward marriage.

However, some women became teachers for reasons related to their desire for independence and to attain some social status. It seems that few chose teaching based on a desire to work with young people in a long-term career. This began to change as the 20th century progressed, and more recent studies show that for many people the motivation to teach is centered on a professional choice: a commitment to work with young people along with the other positive aspects of a teaching career. Nevertheless, there is a group of people who continue to go into teaching without this positive commitment.

Change is also occurring in the areas of gender and socioeconomic characteristics. As previously described, the profession became dominated by women in the 1800s, and although this continues to persist in the present, there is movement toward gender balance. Secondary schools generally have created and maintained this balance throughout the 20th century. However, at the elementary level, many schools have only women teachers, and the attitude seems to continue toward women as the better nurturer for young children. This

attitude is lessening, both on the part of young men who are choosing to enter the profession as elementary teachers, and on the part of administrators who are anxious to hire them. A 1992 study, "Understanding Career Choices of Men in Elementary Education," reports "that 20% of the teachers in the profession of elementary education are men, despite resistance from peers, parents, and the public" (Galbraith, p. 247). It appears that a career which gives both men and women the opportunity to work with children has been a positive change for the profession. Finally, although teachers in the early years were from the upper socioeconomic classes where families were able to provide an education for their children giving them the needed knowledge to be teachers, today's teachers tend to be associated with the middle class. One area that has not changed significantly is related to race and ethnicity. The African Americans and other ethnic and racial minorities are under represented in the teaching force in comparison with the numbers in the general population although, again, variations do occur in specific areas of the nation.

Leaving Teaching

"The morning hope of the teacher, of a day of love and progress, is often closed at evening by despair." (Emerson, 1840/1946, p. 266)

I began this review of the literature as a Trackman to discover breaking points which might account for the failure of beginning teachers to move into fulfilling teaching careers. What I found, however, through studying the early history of public school teaching and the ensuing first decades of the 20th century was that a high number of teachers leaving after only a few years was a normal phenomenon. In the past, when young people set out to teach, it was often just one leg of a journey, and switching tracks to another destination, to other professions or to marriage and family, was an accepted practice. Although some teachers did plan to stay, particularly women who valued independence and men in secondary school positions, it was not until the system of public education began to expand into its present form that teaching began to stabilize as a full-time career. Peoples' motivations to teach became more altruistic, stemming from a desire to work with students. Still, teacher turnover remained high. Expanding numbers of students and schools coupled with various national crises created a significant demand for teachers, and shortages and rumors of shortages, fueled discussion and investigation of teacher attrition (Elsbree, 1939; Lortie, 1975; Stinnett, 1970; Waller, 1965).

In this section of the chapter, again, I am a Trackman, but my perspective

has been altered. It is enlarged. I am no longer looking at the tracks—looking for simple breaks that might cause derailments for teachers traveling along their way. I am seeing now the teachers themselves as they move along, and my search through the literature is for greater understanding of them. In what ways do both the positive and the negative aspects of the institutional practices of education and the day to day work of teaching interact in the lives of practicing teachers? In what ways do these aspects influence them to remain or leave? A broad landscape of studies provides insight into these areas. I have chosen one route beginning again in history and following with more recent research.

Reasons teachers leave teaching

In *The Sociology of Teaching*, Waller (1965) gives a detailed description of mid-century schools, teaching, and teachers. He recognizes and reports that “a very large number of teachers are extremely discontented...especially younger teachers” (p. 422). Although Waller did not pursue specific factors contributing to this discontentment, other researchers at the time were seriously studying the reasons behind dissatisfaction with teaching and its consequence: teacher turnover. One study began in 1965 by The Commission on Strengthening the Teaching Profession, a project of the Biennial Council of Phi

Delta Kappa. Twelve educators were chosen from various institutions across the nation to study and report the conditions associated with teachers leaving teaching. Using previous research findings and their own investigations and conclusions, their work is published in *The Teacher Drop-Out* edited by T. M. Stinnett (1970). This volume describes in detail several of the negative aspects of teaching which they determined cause teachers to quit. Presented in random order, a chapter is devoted to each of these problem areas: (a) low salaries, (b) lack of autonomy, (c) low status, (d) lack of appreciation by the education system of which they are a part (e) overwhelming work load, and (f) lack of means to participate in the decision making apparatus of the school. A chapter is also devoted to the difficulties in teacher education programs to adequately prepare teachers for the real work in real classrooms with real students (p. 1-11).

Subsequent studies continue to affirm that these conditions lead to teacher turnover (DePaul, 2000; Ingersol, 1999; Pigge & Marso, 1992, 1997; Shen, 1997a, 1997b). More recent studies also have uncovered other negative aspects which add to the problem. In the 1980s, a government sponsored document, *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Education, 1983), published information showing a decline in student achievement. This caused

another round of research focused on teaching and teachers. Prompted, also, by concern over a possible teacher shortage, a renewed effort was undertaken to more specifically investigate teacher attrition. A series of reports was sponsored by the Center for Education Statistics (CES) in the U.S. Department of Education which were to lay the groundwork for systematic collection of information on the supply and demand of teachers. In a 1988 report, *Assessing Teacher Supply and Demand*, a summary was given of the current research on newer teachers leaving:

[Due to] high turnover during the first five years of teaching...individuals may leave because of a mismatch between original expectations and actual experience as teachers, or because of attractive outside opportunities. Incoming teachers often get the least desirable assignments, spend more time preparing for classes, and lack an established support network. They are also often adjusting to a first job and the experience of living autonomously. Conflicts may arise between the demands of holding a job and family formation....Transfers to other occupations are generally easier at this early phase...as salaries and debt obligations are lower, and...[investment] is not high. (Haggstrom, Darling-

Hammond, & Grissmer, 1988, p. 15)

The CES series of reports has led to national surveys about schools and teachers through the past two decades, including the annual Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS). These surveys have furnished more specific information about the state of the teaching force including details about the characteristics and destinations of teachers leaving. Two large studies interpreted data from the SASSs of 1987-88 and the follow-up studies of 1988-89. The 1987-88 survey involved 593 teachers and the follow-up study surveyed 8,071 teachers. Findings from the first study (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997) showed some of the characteristics of teachers who stayed, moved (within education), or left education. Although the original intent was to test possible differences between special and general education teachers, findings were generalized to both groups. Three main findings relating specifically to leaving education were revealed in this study: (a) women teachers under thirty were more likely to leave compared to men and to women over 30, (b) teachers in a position for which they were not qualified were more likely to leave, and (c) low salary was associated with leaving. The second study (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1997) reported the annual percentage of teachers leaving during the two year period from 1987 to 1989 to

be 8%. Of these, 23% were employed in some aspect of education (approximately 50% in administration); 25% were home, 23% retired, and 17% were engaged in other work (20% of which were professional positions related to teaching).

Throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, more sophisticated technology has enabled a variety of approaches to education research. Both the national surveys and smaller studies continue to generate and support a knowledge base for issues related to teacher retention and attrition. A study by Shen (1997b) drawing on the 1990-91 SASS and a follow-up study in 1992 interpreted data from 684 teachers who left teaching voluntarily. Younger teachers and lower salaries were again associated with those who left. This study also found that certain school conditions had an impact on teachers leaving: (a) Teachers were more likely to leave schools where the faculty had a higher percentage of teachers with less than three years of experience, and (b) teachers were more likely to leave schools that were considered to be socio-economically disadvantaged. In addition, from the 2,233 teachers surveyed who were continuing to teach, positive aspects related to teachers staying were reported: Teachers perceived that “administrators know their problems better,

that they have influence over school and teaching-related policies, and that teaching has more advantages than disadvantages” (Shen, 1997a, p. 38).

Another characteristic of teaching which has been associated with teacher attrition is low status. When a teacher “has concluded that the professional prestige of the education profession is not as high as he was led to believe it would be,” it may become a factor in the decision to leave (Marlow, Inman, & Betancourt-Smith, 1997, p. 213). The intention of their study was to find whether or not certain predictor factors associated with attrition in previous research were present in a sample of teachers. If factors associated with attrition could be confirmed, the information would be useful in knowing when teachers were on track for abandoning their careers. A random sample of 100 schools was selected from Mid-southern and Southeastern states, and from these schools, 602 teachers, also randomly selected, participated in the study. Of the 100 teachers with one to four years of experience, 36.4% confirmed that discouragement with teaching is associated with a lack of prestige. Low status was also a source of discouragement for 127 teachers with five to ten years of experience. The researchers concluded that among these teachers feelings of a lack of prestige are present and appear to rise with experience. The Marlow et al.

study supports earlier findings that lack of prestige does contribute to negative feelings about teaching. "Beginning teachers who do not feel supported by the community are likely to become disillusioned...[and] feel pressure to improve in some undefined and sometimes unrealistic way, a feeling that can contribute to the decision to leave teaching" (Marlow et al., p. 213).

National commissions, education researchers, state teacher associations, and individual social scientists continue to tally what is known about teachers who leave and the reasons they give for doing so. In Ingersoll's 2001 summary report, the national teacher turnover rate is 13.2%, a rise of about 5% since the 1980s. The percentages of the reasons given are stated as follows: 27%, retirement; 12%, school staffing actions; 45%, personal including pregnancy, health, family move, family illness; 24%, pursuing another job; and 25%, dissatisfaction with teaching. The list continues with reasons teachers give for the dissatisfaction with teaching: 45%, low salary; 38%, lack of student motivation; 30%, inadequate administrative support; 30% student discipline problems; 23%, inadequate time to prepare; 18%, lack of faculty influence and autonomy; 13%, large class sizes; 11%, intrusion on teaching time; 10%, professional advancement (Ingersoll, 1999, p. 21). In a recent interview conversation with a

Des Moines Register reporter, Ingersoll concludes: “Four things drive people out of teaching...low salaries, student discipline issues, lack of support...and having little input into decisions that affect their jobs....Student discipline—or the lack of it—is the big one” (as cited in Bolton, 2002, p. 5A).

Problems of beginning teachers.

Knowing the general issues related to teacher attrition has led to more specific research on the experiences of beginning teachers, their problems, and needs (Berliner, 2000; DePaul, 2000; Ganser, 1999; Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Huberman, 1993). These experiences and problems correspond to the findings on teacher turnover. For example, a recent study of new teachers shows that they continue to be given students with the most challenging needs, remedial classes, and multiple preparations (DePaul, 2000; Glickman et al., 2001). These situations lead to difficulty in classroom management and discipline and may leave new teachers feeling helpless in their situations. Earlier, particularly in Veenman’s (1984) study (as cited in Ganser, 1999), meta-analysis of the findings from studies of the perceived problems of beginning teachers produced a rank ordering of 24 items. The most oft-cited difficulties were related to classroom management or

discipline, student motivation, students' differences, and student assessment followed by relations with parents (Veenman as cited in Ganser, 1999, p. 15). Other problems in the list related to the organization of the classroom, lessons and materials, along with understanding the complexities of the school system and policies. Three items in the 1984 list were associated with perceived needs related to time although they were not highly ranked: heavy teaching load resulting in lack of adequate time for preparation; burden of clerical work; lack of spare time. More recent work by Ganser (1999) used Veenman's rank order from the 1984 study and tested it against the perceived needs of a group of teachers in the late 1990s. The 1990s' participants included 186 Wisconsin teachers with one to three years experience, 125 teachers with four to five years experience randomly selected from large urban districts on the East coast, and 278 veteran Wisconsin teachers with an average of eighteen years of experience. Each teacher in each of the groups was asked to rank order the 24 items according to their perception of the problems and needs of beginning teachers. Results showed that the veteran teachers' perceptions of beginning teachers' needs were more closely related to Veenman's study: Problems related to teaching students ranked highest. However, the findings from the beginning teachers themselves,

both the Wisconsin and Urban groups of teachers, ordered their first three problems and needs as (a) lack of spare time, (b) burden of clerical work, and (c) heavy teaching load resulting in insufficient preparation time. Student discipline and teaching concerns followed. The most notable and relevant differences are the responses related to time. In the 1984 study, the items related to time were not highly ranked: Heavy teaching load and lack of time to prepare was ninth, clerical work was sixteenth, and lack of spare time was twenty-second. Although the veteran teachers of the 1990s did not rank these at those low levels, they did not perceive these as the uppermost needs whereas the new teachers did.

Overall, in the Ganser (1999) study, heavy workloads and lack of professional and personal time rank highest among the top five problems. This study shows that problems and needs of beginning teachers may have changed over time and that they vary among different groups of teachers. Further, as Ganser concludes, careful consideration must be given to the problems and needs of the specific group of beginning teachers when creating induction and mentoring programs.

Earlier findings may not be relevant for the present time period as the difficulty in working conditions, public expectations of high student achievement, and the demands on teachers have increased over time.

Adult development and teacher attrition.

Whether they are presented as the reasons given for dissatisfaction by teachers who have left teaching or presented as the problems of beginning teachers who continue to teach, the difficulties teachers confront are well-researched, and they result in career abandonment by approximately half of new teachers within the first seven years (Ingersoll, 1999; Wong & Wong, 1991). The magnitude and complexity of the issues surrounding teacher attrition have inspired a variety of approaches by researchers. For example, one avenue is to apply theories from sociological studies in adult development, life cycles, and career patterns. In the 1980s, Grissmer and Kirby (1987) developed a particular theory of teacher attrition “embedding the patterns of attrition in a career and life cycle context” (p. xii). This theory predicts a U shaped curve in the teaching profession: Attrition will be higher for newer teachers, lower for the middle years of teachers’ working lives, and higher as retirement age is reached. This prediction has been confirmed by other studies (Huberman, 1993; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991). According to the theory of adult life cycles, attrition among new teachers can be expected because “the young adult aged 20 to 35 is on an exciting search for status, comfort, happiness in work,

family, and friends” (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2001, p. 75). With this perspective, it is possible to accept that a number of new teachers leave for normal life cycle events and career advancements just as they have from the beginning of public education. In Grissmer and Kirby’s theoretical work (1987), they divided new teachers who leave into three groups. They estimated that along with a group of teachers leaving for expected reasons, another group leaves involuntarily at the request of the schools. The third group leaves voluntarily because teaching is not meeting their expectations. They summarize that this group of teachers leaves because of

their reevaluation of the costs and benefits of the current job versus alternatives based on newly acquired information about the current job, or a change in other opportunities not available when the decision to be a teacher was made, or a combination of both. (p. 14)

This conclusion, based on the Human Capital Theory approach to teacher attrition, succinctly and objectively summarizes a rationale for teachers leaving teaching. In more common terms, it may be interpreted that new teachers, when confronted with the real work of teaching in their newly acquired positions, undergo a reevaluation or a “culture or reality shock” (Peterson, as cited in Sikes,

Measor, & Woods, 1985). This reevaluation becomes a clash between the idealistic expectations, *benefits*, usually held by new teachers and the realization of the *costs* in the actual practice of teaching and the life of a teacher (Lortie, 1975). These *costs*, such as low salary, heavy workload, lack of time, difficult students, lack of autonomy, and the many others listed earlier, are counter to the needs of young people as theorized in adult development: “In teaching...the young adult period, which should be one of romance, quickly becomes one of disillusionment” (Glickman et al., 2001, p. 75).

Education researchers have grappled with the problems of disillusionment as it is often a precursor to attrition among new teachers. Following the socio-psychological model of adult development and life cycles, they have attempted to delineate stages in the career patterns of teachers which are usually encountered over a lifetime of teaching (Berliner, 2000; Brock & Grady, 2001; Dodd, 2001; Glickman et al., 2001; Huberman, 1993; Pigge & Marso, 1997; Sikes et al., 1985; Steffy, 1989). This breakdown of teachers’ development into stages has opened paths for deeper exploration into teachers’ characteristics and the experiences which might lead to disillusionment and career abandonment.

An early study suggested that teachers' development could be gauged by their movement through certain concerns for themselves and their students. This became the "concern' approach, according to the focus of a teacher's thoughts" (Fuller as cited in Oser, 1993, p. 80). These concerns covered three areas: self/survival, instructional/task, and students' needs/impact. These stages were thought to be "sequential and accumulative" (Pigge & Marso, 1997, p. 225).

Studies have shown that these progressive concerns are felt as teachers develop over time and with experience, although they do not always follow lock- step patterns and time frames among beginning teachers (Pigge & Marso, 1997). A more detailed division of development stages is proposed by Berliner (2000). This expansion includes the novice stage, advanced beginner, competent teacher, proficient teacher, and expert teacher (p. 360). Theorists who study these early years of teachers' careers ascribe somewhat varying names and time frames to the phases and stages of development. However, all recognize feelings of disillusionment as a problem encountered in the beginning stage:

"Future teachers...need to know that, no matter how well prepared they think they are, that first year of teaching will be one of 'confusion, chaos, and survival'" (Dodd, 2001, p.19). In addition, new teachers need to know that "becoming

acclimated to the daily realities” of teaching may take several years (Brock & Grady, 2001, p. 17).

Teaching is at best challenging, and at worst, it is difficult, disillusioning, and overwhelming, particularly for new teachers. Research studies have produced lists of reasons teachers give for leaving and their counterpart lists of problems perceived by new teachers. Stating these reasons and problems, naming them, is only a first step toward understanding teacher attrition. The next step is to explore the meaning of these names, these words, by examining research into teachers’ experiences. The third step is to gain insight into how, in combination, these problems and experiences create a negative emotional impact on the lives of teachers. Therefore, the next section of this chapter is in two parts. The first reviews some of the literature related to disillusionment and more specific problems of new teachers, and the second describes the emotional impact on teachers which further contributes to disillusionment, stress, and ultimately, to their decisions to leave.

To begin, in the lists of the problems of new teachers and the reasons they leave, there are differences in their wording, in their order of importance, and their presentation. As with any multifaceted problem, it is more easily

assessed and understood when it is broken into manageable parts. After analyzing the problems and experiences as seen in the literature, searching for commonalities among them, I have subsumed the most serious problems and reasons teachers leave under four broad categories: Disillusionment and Obstacles to Teaching and Learning, Unreasonable Demands Associated with Workload and Time, Lack of Professional Support and Respect, and The Paradoxical Issue of Salary. Social status or prestige will also be addressed.

Disillusionment and obstacles to teaching and learning.

Teachers become teachers because they want to interact with young people. They want to help them learn and to influence their “attitudes toward thinking and learning, toward becoming good citizens, and toward realizing their full potentials” (Cohn, 1992, p. 114). Lortie (1975) studied the intrinsic rewards of teaching, which he termed psychic rewards, and found they played a key role in teachers’ professional satisfaction. In Lortie’s study of 5,886 Dade County Florida teachers, 86.1% listed “knowing that I have ‘reached’ students and they have learned” as their major source of work satisfaction (p. 104). Satisfaction is attained when teachers are successful, when they perceive they are meeting these goals. “It may be safe to venture the assertion that few teachers quit

because they do not like teaching” (Thorndike & Hagen as cited in Stinnett, 1970, p. 3). The circumstances which prevent teachers from achieving their desire to reach and teach students are the major causes of their disillusionment, dissatisfaction, and stress. Often, it is the difficulty of building teaching/learning relationships with students which first frustrates this desire and begins their feelings of disillusionment. Whether the problems are listed by new teachers as classroom management, motivating, disciplining, or other terms specific to keeping order in a classroom and teaching students, overcoming the obstacles in building productive relationships with students requires both physical and mental energy and takes an emotional toll on teachers. One early report (Hughes, 1959), “estimated that about 40% of a teachers’ actions are directed toward maintaining order” (as cited in Lortie, 1975, p. 154). Since then, managing a classroom may have become even more time-consuming and exhausting: Decreases in students’ motivation to learn and in students’ respect for teachers contribute to greater problems in classroom management (Cohn, 1992; Freidman, 1995; Pagano, Weiner, & Rand, 1997).

Lack of respect by students, at times, escalates into serious conflicts and threats of violence preventing teaching. The threats of violence may include

verbal and physical assaults between students and between students and teachers. Dealing with conflicts and the level of violence is a problem for many teachers particularly in “high poverty, urban public schools” (Ingersoll, 1999, p. 21). Teachers who left these schools ranked “Unsafe Environment” as their third reason for leaving teaching after lack of student motivation and poor salary (p. 21). Legally an assault may be any act that causes pain or injury to a person or the fear of immediate physical contact that would be painful or offensive. Threats of violence or sexual contact are included. Actual physical contact does not need to take place but the ability to execute the act must exist (*“DMEA Tempo,”* 2002). Assaults on teachers are now tracked in national surveys. “According to the National Center for Education Statistics, from 1995-1999, teachers in this country were the victims of 635,000 violent crimes (rape, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault)” (p.1). The majority of crimes against teachers were simple assaults; nevertheless, dealing with the conflicts and the level of violence in the day to day work of teaching is disillusioning, frustrating, and stressful because the goal of reaching and helping students often becomes impossible.

Out-of-field teaching is another reason teachers give for leaving teaching (Boe, Bobbin, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Ingersoll, 1998). When teachers

are hired into positions for which they are not certified or for which they have had little or no experience, teachers face more difficult obstacles to teaching. When teachers are not in their field of expertise, when they, themselves, are struggling to learn the material, the task of developing a teaching and learning relationship becomes more difficult. Ingersoll (1998) reports that given the high demand for teachers and the shortages in some areas, both geographical and subject matter, school districts are often forced to “hire less qualified teachers, assign teachers trained in another field or grade level to teach in the understaffed area, [or] make extensive use of substitutes” (p. 4). *What Matters Most: Teaching for Americas Future* (1996) reports some of the national statistics on out-of-field teaching: 56% of high school students taking physical science are taught by out-of-field teachers as are 27% of those taking math and 21% taking English. The situation is even more dramatic in lower-socioeconomic schools where 50% of math and science teachers do not have a license or degree in those fields (p. 14-16). This difference is often due to the inequitable allocation of resources within large school districts (Ingersoll, 1998; Kozol, 1967, 1991; Krie, 1998).

Inequitable allocations associated with teacher attrition are shown in another study which finds that lower status schools have a larger percentage of

new teachers and that they are less likely to be considered of high quality (Krie as cited in Krie, 1998). Findings on percentages of turnover in lower status schools coincide with these findings: Lower socioeconomic schools have an above average turnover rate of 14.2% compared to 13.2 % overall (Ingersoll, 1999). As reviewed earlier, Shen's study (1997a, 1997b) also found that teachers were more likely to leave lower socioeconomic schools and schools with a high percentage of teachers with fewer than three years.

Gaining the respect of students and motivating them to learn, the key components of successful classroom management, may be next to impossible for a teacher struggling with the content and delivery of the subject matter. Out-of-field teaching, unmotivated, disrespectful and disruptive students, and the level of violence in schools are obstacles either separately or combined, which contribute to the development of disillusionment. This may begin the process of frustration and stress leading to career burnout and eventual career abandonment (Truch, 1980).

Unreasonable demands of workload and time.

A second area associated with teachers' dissatisfaction and career abandonment is the workload and its required time. These two issues continue to

rank highly in the literature of reasons teachers leave and problems of beginning teachers (Ganser, 1999; Ingersoll as cited in Joerger & Bremer, 2001). Ironically, by the mid-20th century, recognition and concern for the mounting work and time commitment of teachers were already being addressed: "Cocurricular activities have expanded, teachers are expected to do more counseling, class periods have increased in length, democratic participation of teachers in planning and policy-making demands some time, and general social tensions have increased discipline problems" (Douglas as cited in Stinnett, 1970, p. 7). The 1965 Commission on Strengthening the Teaching Profession reported that many "critics [of education state] that the total workload of the American teacher is now almost, if not actually, unmanageable..." (p. 7). Lortie (1975) recognized the meaning of time for teachers "as the single most important, general resource teachers possess in their quest for productivity and psychic rewards" (p. 177). He studied intently the workload and time factors associated with dissatisfaction. He divided the task/time issue into two types: "potentially productive time," when teachers are engaged in work associated directly with teaching and learning, and "inert time," when teachers are engaged in required work not directly associated with teaching and learning such as committees and other meetings (p. 176).

Dissatisfaction among teachers relating to workload and time in his study were classified as inert time: clerical duties, interruptions, duties outside the class, large classes, grading papers, and so forth. Another complaint was listed as *time pressures* which he explained as “sudden requests...or short deadlines” that take away from other work (p. 176). He found that frustration came from the inability of teachers to control their work and time, so that they can devote their energy and “potentially productive time” to teaching (p.177).

The changing and increasing workload and time commitment on teachers' lives continue to be of concern among researchers as they study their relationship with retention and attrition (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992, 1998; Louis, 1992; Truch, 1980). Hargreaves (1994) studied the significance of these changes. He presents arguments as to whether these changes represent a move toward “professionalism” or a more recent concept, “intensification” (p. 117). The concept of intensification stems from a description of changing labor processes (Larson as cited in Hargreaves, 1994, p. 119). In terms related to the work of teaching, it is characterized by (a) reduced time for relaxation or lunch during the working day, (b) lack of time to retool one's skills and keep up with one's field, (c) chronic and persistent overload...which reduces

autonomy and inhibits involvement in creative planning, (d) reduction in the quality of teaching, and (e) responsibility to cover personnel shortages.

Hargreaves (1994) conducted interviews with 12 principals and 28 elementary teachers from 6 school districts. The intent of the study was to determine how teachers use their increased planning time. Is the increased planning time absorbed into the regular work necessary for teaching and learning (related to intensification)? Or, is the increased planning time used to further collaboration with colleagues and the development of the total school's culture (related to professionalism)? First, increased planning time did "relieve stress, give them back a personal life, allow them to 'do more,' to contribute more to extracurricular activities, and to improve the quality of their planning and instruction" (p. 137). Increased planning time also had negative consequences: more bureaucratic demands and meetings.

Hargreaves (1994) draws broader implications in relation to professionalism and intensification. First, the idea that teachers have moved toward greater *professionalism* is based on changes in schools which have given teachers more opportunities and more responsibilities for decision-making, curriculum development, and professional growth. The struggle toward

professionalism widens the role of teaching, encompassing more social and emotional goals. Other recent changes in many schools may be considered as the result of *intensification* such as longer school days, more administrative chores, and more rigorous assessment and accountability. These additions to a teacher's work is added to the already heavy demands as well as those which come from within themselves: "teachers appear to drive themselves with almost merciless enthusiasm and commitment in an attempt to meet the virtually unattainable standards of pedagogical perfection they set themselves" (p. 126). Hargreaves' study shows that intensification is one part of the increase in teachers' workload and time commitment. On the other hand, Hargreaves found that the professionalism plays a significant part in this increase in workload and time as teachers attempt to meet the increasing demands of their jobs.

In another report on teaching and intensification, describing the changes and increases in the workload and time requirements, specific consequences for women are explored. Apple and Jungck (1992) wondered about the historical development of education and the era of intensification. They concluded that the dominance of women in the profession, "the complicated reality of gendered labour," has both increased the intensification and the workload and time

requirements, while at the same time women are most hurt by intensification (p. 27). They argued that intensification has led to erosion of teachers' working conditions: "from having no time at all to even go to the bathroom, have a cup of coffee or relax, to having a total absence of time to keep up with one's field, [to]...a chronic sense of work overload that has escalated over time" (p. 25). The lives of women teachers, in particular, are of concern because they often must go home to face the needs and demands of a family after an emotional and exhausting teaching day (p. 39). Yet, the concern is not just for teachers or women teachers. They are also concerned for the productive and effective work of teaching: student learning and achievement. In the process of intensification, more is added, and in theory, the quality of the work diminishes. When more work is added to the responsibilities of teachers for the overall work of the school, less time and energy are available for the work of teaching and helping students, frustrating the real desires of teachers which again relates to teacher attrition (Apple & Jungck, 1992, p. 25).

Despite the recognition forty years ago by the 1965 Commission on Strengthening the Teaching Profession (Stinnett, 1970) that teachers were being asked to do the impossible, the workload and time commitment has increased.

Whether it is called “professionalism” or “intensification,” the workload and the time required to successfully accomplish the work pose serious problems for teachers. Further, the demands of teaching, both the workload and time, especially impact women teachers. Not surprisingly, studies have continued to show that women under 30 are the most likely to leave (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997). The “fiscal crisis...has directly impinged on...classroom life, [and] the intensification of the teachers’ workload, the lack of availability of sufficient resources, the organizational structure...and the complicated reality of gendered labour” have combined to create dissatisfaction among all teachers (Apple & Jungck, 1992, p. 26).

The lack of professional support and respect.

The third category of problems reported by new teachers and reasons given by teachers who have left can be described as difficulties in gaining needed professional support and respect. Research studies address complaints in this category in a variety of ways (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Ingersoll, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Natale, 1993; Shann, 1998; Shen, 1997a, 1997b). Teachers feel a lack of support from the adults they expect to provide help: administrators, parents, colleagues, and those outside the immediate school district such as legislators

and other government systems. Lack of materials and teaching resources are also listed as problem areas and fall into this category as lack of support by the local community and government.

In an updated analysis of the national Schools and Staffing Surveys between 1987-1995, Ingersoll (1999) reports that inadequate administrative support ranks second only to low salary, and lack of community support ranks fifth among reasons teachers leave. A national 1992 Metropolitan Life Survey (as cited in Natale, 1993) lists that 45% of teachers under 30 state their main reason for leaving as inadequate administrative support. In another study, 40% of teachers who had left listed lack of support or help for their students from parents as part of their decision to leave (Natale, 1993). Finally, in a recent Boston University study Shann (1998) surveyed a representative sample from four middle schools. Fifty-eight of 200 teachers were both surveyed and interviewed. Fourteen items were tested such as salary, job security, and student relationships as well as other problems similar to earlier studies. Findings from this study showed that “teachers were least satisfied with parent-teaching relationships” (p. 69). In summary, the lack of professional support appears significant among the problems teachers report and the reasons teachers give for

leaving teaching.

Lack of support from people who could be expected to assist teachers is just one part of a triangle within the category of dissatisfaction with professional support and respect. The other two sides are lack of autonomy and lack of influence in the decision making practices of the school (Ingersol, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Shann, 1998). In Ingersoll's report (1999), the lack of faculty influence and autonomy were combined and ranked fifth in the reasons for dissatisfaction and leaving (p. 21). In the Boston University study (Shann, 1998), "teachers were uniformly dissatisfied with their level of participation in decision making" (p. 69).

Lortie (1975) analyzes the rather paradoxical nature of teachers' relationships with other adults in the education setting. Teachers "try to strike an acceptable balance between autonomy and support" (p. 201). Given that teaching and learning are uppermost among teachers' goals, teachers want the actions of administrators, parents, and colleagues to advance them in that effort. Teachers perceive actions as unsupportive and detrimental to meeting their goals when parents do not help their students, when administrators intrude on their time with extra jobs and meetings which they see as unimportant, and when colleagues do not carry their fair share of the workload. At the same time,

overzealous parental involvement, being ignored by administrators when decisions are being made that affect their teaching and learning situations, and being left out of the social life of the faculty present other kinds of problems and dissatisfaction. Teachers “want the most autonomy they can get while simultaneously receiving the help they need” (Lortie, 1975, p. 202). Since the problems of lack of support, lack of autonomy, and lack of influence have continued to rank high as reasons for teachers leaving, it appears that an acceptable balance, which implies effective working relationships with other educators, parents, and the community, is difficult to achieve.

The paradoxical issue of salary.

The final problem area related to teacher attrition is salary. Salary, usually preceded by the adjective *low*, has been connected with teaching throughout the history of American public education as described earlier in this chapter. Salary continues to be an issue, and in some ways, it is a paradoxical one particularly for new teachers. Often it is listed as the main reason teachers leave, but that is not supported by all of the research. Some studies do show salary to be an important determinant of dissatisfaction (Ingersol, 1999; Natale, 1993). Other studies indicate that salary has less importance (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Shann,

1998; Stinnett, 1970; Truch, 1980). Depending on a teacher's gender and situation, the stability of the economy, the geographic location, and comparisons with other professions, salary can take on different meanings.

Lortie (1975) reported that the level of salary had more relevance for men than women. He reported on a study by Mason (1981) in which 63% of the men teachers were concerned about "supporting a family on a teacher's salary" (as cited in Lortie, p. 87). Similarly, in Lortie's study (1975) when teachers were asked about the "costs" of choosing a teaching career, 59% of the men responded with "inadequate money income" while only 4% of the women responded in the same way. Toch (1991) reviewed some of the recent improvements in teachers' salaries. These improvements were in response to a serious drop in the purchasing power of teachers' salaries during the 1970s. From 1972-73 to 1982-83, the purchasing power of teachers' pay dropped 12%. A teacher was making less than middle class wages. The average salary was \$20,000.00, and the poverty level was considered \$25,000.00 for a family of four. Fortunately, the reform movements of the 1980s focused on teachers, and their importance in the education system has been recognized; salary increases have accompanied this recognition.

A related outcome of the focus on education in the 1980s was the realization that a future shortage of teachers was probable. To attract people into the teaching field, the beginning levels of teachers' salaries were raised.

"Earnings are 'front-loaded' in the sense that one begins at a high level relative to one's ultimate earning potential" (Lortie, 1975, p. 84). Because of the current salary schedule systems, beginning teachers are aware that long service will result in limited salary increases. This may deter them from becoming teachers or remaining in the field.

The National Education Association (NEA) compiled recent information on teachers' salaries and other relevant and current income information from several sources as indicated. These were reported in "The NEA: NEA Teacher Shortage Fact Sheet" (n.d.):

Average beginning teacher salary--\$27,989.00. (American Federation of Teachers, 1999-2000, Teacher Salary Survey)

Average teacher's salary--\$41,724.00. (NEA Rankings of the States 2000 and Estimates of School Statistics 2001)

Teachers ages 22-28 earned an average of \$7,894.00 less per year than other college educated adults of the same age in 1998. Teachers 44-50

earned \$23,655.00 less than their counterparts in other occupations.

Teachers with a Masters Degree earned \$32,511 less than non-teachers with a Masters Degree. (*Education Week*, "Quality Counts," 2000)

National averages of teachers' salaries are helpful, but other considerations are important such as geographic location. Where a teacher lives and the cost of living is necessary for a more realistic assessment of the worth of a salary. Hare, Nathan, Darland, and Laine (2000) have compiled information on salary issues in the Mid-west. Shortages of teachers and shortages in particular subject matter areas and also special education have caused 28% of the school districts to raise beginning teachers' salaries. The average salary ranges from \$22,000.00 to \$28,000.00. Yet, an increasing problem is the gap in salaries among districts within the states. This study also reports that determining salaries is complicated because of comparing nine-month schedules with year-long salary schedules. Also, some teachers increase their salaries by working with extra-curricular activities, but the availability for additional income is not present in all districts. And again, the worth of the salary is still difficult to evaluate because the cost of living changes in different parts of states and between smaller and larger communities (Hare et al., 2000). Finally, the issues surrounding low salaries

continue to play a large part in teachers' decisions to leave teaching. Choosing teaching *costs*, but the actual amount appears to be dependent on the teacher and his or her circumstances.

The place of prestige.

From the first days of public education, low salary and low social status or prestige have been linked. School terms were short, and requirements for employment beyond willingness and a basic education were minimal. For young men and later young women, teaching was a temporary job. These conditions led not only to a minimal salary, but also prevented teaching from achieving the level of a respected profession with an accompanying social status. Though change has occurred and salary and status have been elevated, the quest for professional status continues. The degree to which social status or prestige plays a part in teacher dissatisfaction is unclear. For example, as indicated earlier (Marlow et al., 1997) it may be currently and more strongly connected with professional support and respect. When teachers feel dissatisfaction from lack of support, lack of influence, and lack of autonomy, they may also be reacting to feelings from lack of status. Likewise, when teachers' salaries are lower than others with similar education and experience, the frustration may be combined

with frustration related to low status. Although low status has been studied and confirmed as a contributing factor in dissatisfaction among teachers, it was not listed as a separate item in Veenman's 1984 findings nor in Ganser's 1999 findings. It was also not noted in Ingersoll's 1999 summary of current reasons teachers leave. This may be a reflection that social status or prestige by itself has lost importance particularly in middle class society where teachers generally reside.

The emotional impact of teaching.

The obstacles preventing effective teaching, the demands of the work and time commitment, the lack of professional support and respect, and issues related to salary and status are the reasons most often associated with leaving teaching. They are also the problems new teachers confront, which begin their feelings of disillusionment. When these feelings of disillusionment, frustration, and stress begin to mount, they produce an emotional impact on teachers.

"Teaching has always been an emotional profession...charged...positively and negatively. It is a passionate vocation" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 53). As research confirms, the desire to teach students and to make a difference in their lives is the heart of a teacher (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998;

Lortie, 1975). When teachers struggle and fail to meet these goals with students, the struggle and failure are deeply felt.

Teaching is hard emotional labour....Working yourself up to feel positive, hopeful and enthusiastic...even when you don't feel like it, is always difficult. When you are exhausted by external and constantly shifting change demands, disheartened by public criticism, feeling guilty that you haven't improved enough, and forever in fear of being labeled a failure, then the emotional labour of teaching can become almost impossible to bear. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 56)

Literature on the emotional impact of teaching on the lives of teachers has been discussed in the general terms of stress and burnout. However, as more is understood about the emotional make-up of human beings, researchers are studying more specific human responses (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 17). They are exploring different types of emotions and the situations which cause them. Two specific feelings associated with teaching which have been investigated by researchers are guilt and shame (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Lortie, 1975).

Guilt may be understood as "the emotional core of our conscience....It is

emotion which results from behaving in a manner contrary to our beliefs and values" (Bradshaw, 1988, p.17). In analyzing the guilt carried by teachers "as the central emotional preoccupation" of teachers, Hargreaves (1994) describes different types of guilt and their causes. He expands on the definition by Bradshaw and uses working definitions of two specific types of guilt. Persecutory guilt is caused by failure to do or not do something which is imposed by an outside authority. Depressive guilt results when a person "ignores, betrays or fails to protect the people or values" from his or her own expectations of himself or herself (Davis as cited in Hargreaves, 1994, p. 143). Hargreaves distinguishes between 'guilt trips,' which teachers develop in response to situations that have a potential for causing guilt, and 'guilt traps' which are the conditions inherent in the work of teaching. Hargreaves presents four areas that stimulate guilt among teachers. First, teachers care about their students and about teaching them. When they are unable to provide the care and nurturance they believe their students need, they feel guilty. A second source of guilt for teachers is the fact that there is always more that could be done. "The bags and briefcases that teachers carry, the piles of work they take home and back...are the symbolic burdens of guilt that teachers carry around with them" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.

148). Both of these sources of guilt are forms of depressive, self-imposed guilt.

The third source of guilt, causing persecutory guilt, stems from the intensification and accountability in teachers' work. As detailed earlier, "the time demands of teaching have become more densely packed, multiple innovations have had to be accommodated, the integration of special needs students into ordinary classes has required additional planning, and shared decision making has also called for extra investments in time" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 149). These demands lead to persecutory guilt, a fear that others' expectations can't be met such as raising student achievement to impossible levels. Another source of this type of guilt from fear is related to the expectations of teachers to be perfect, to be able to meet all demands and expectations. This type of guilt also occurs when teachers perceive that others expect them to be perfect, to meet an ideal image of a teacher. "Teachers are hardest on themselves....There is a fear of not measuring up, of having somebody think that they're not doing a good job" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 150). The emotion of guilt, when excessive and continuing, can become toxic leading to burnout and career abandonment.

A related emotion, shame, is defined as a "painful feeling about oneself as a person...a matter of identity" (Bradshaw, 1988, p. 17). Whereas guilt is a

painful feeling about something one has done or failed to do and has the possibility of repair, shame is associated with the lack of self-worth (Fossum & Mason as cited in Bradshaw, 1988, p. 17). Lortie (1975) reviews the role of teacher and its predisposition to foster shame. When teachers assume the role of teacher, they assume the responsibility for leadership in the classroom, as well as other traits such as empathy and patience. These qualities are not learned such as knowledge or skills. They are characteristics of a teacher's personality. The "self of a teacher, his very personality, is deeply engaged in classroom work; the self must be used and disciplined as a tool necessary for achieving results and work gratification" (Lortie, 1975, p. 156). Shame results when teachers feel they personally are not adequate for the demands of their roles. In Lortie's (1975) study, feelings of shame were related to teachers' "behavior which violates their responsibility to students and behavior which damages their relationship with students" (p. 158). Their own behaviors reduce their feelings of self-confidence and self-worth.

Guilt and shame are the consequences of "threats to one's identity and to achieving one's goals" (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p. 54). These two powerful emotions create tension and stress which may develop into burnout. Numerous

studies have been conducted on the natures of stress and burnout (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Farber, 1998; Friedman, 1995; Guglielmi & Tatrow, 1998; Meléndez & de Guzmán, 1983; Truch, 1980). Stress is a “cognitive appraisal” of a situation which is then interpreted as either a threat or a challenge (Selye as cited in Meléndez & de Guzmán, 1983, p.10). According to this determination, a person’s response can be positive “eustress,” interpreting the situation as a challenge, or “distress,” interpreting the situation as a threat (Lazaurs & Tolpin as cited in Meléndez & de Guzmán, 1983, p. 10). In the literature related to teachers, stress is usually understood to be distress, and burnout is a “long-term stress reaction” (Maslach & Schaufele as cited in Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 8). Furthermore, burnout is a “physiological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment....Most researchers consider emotional exhaustion as the key dimension in the syndrome (Schaufeli, Engmann, & Girault as cited in Brouwers & Tomic, 2000, p. 8).

Researchers have studied the process of stress as it becomes burnout. It is characterized by a series of conditions:

1. “The Honeymoon” is the beginning stage; high energy, enthusiasm,

and job satisfaction start to wear off.

2. “Fuel Shortage” includes the early symptoms of inefficiency at work: dissatisfaction with the job, fatigued, sleepless nights, increased smoking or drinking, or other means of escape.
3. “Chronic Symptoms: involve one’s awareness of physical and psychological symptoms—chronic exhaustion, physical illness, anger, and depression.
4. The “Crisis” stage permits symptoms of burnout to reach an acute phase and to obsess the individual with problems.
5. “Hitting the Wall” is the stage of total professional deterioration and dysfunction of physical and psychological health. (Veninga & Spradley as cited in Meléndez & de Guzmán, 1983, p.12-13).

Teachers begin with enthusiasm, energy, and high expectations. As reality dawns, bringing weariness and frustration, disillusionment begins. If disillusionment deteriorates into stress, the process of stress moving to burnout has begun. Farber (1998) adds further details to this description. Burned out teachers are people who give maximum effort and continue to maximize their effort even when they are not succeeding. They seem incapable of reducing their

expectations to a reasonable, realistic level (Farber, 1998). They exhaust themselves from not only the effort, but the frustration, guilt, and shame.

The types of stress in helping professions.

In previous sections of this chapter, through a review of literature, the goals of teachers and the obstacles they face in teaching have been described. These may result in feelings of disillusionment, frustration, guilt, and shame. These negative emotions begin the process of stress and may lead to burnout. Before continuing with the physical and behavioral symptoms of stress and burnout, however, it is important to bring attention to three specific types of stress related to the work of people in helping professions in general. These types of stress are found among teachers, and they may play a considerable part in leading to burnout.

The first type is known as empathetic stress syndrome which may result when teachers empathize with the problems of their students. As described earlier in the chapter, caring is in the nature of teaching and teachers. For many students, the teacher is the person who is the stable, available, and listening adult in their lives. Teachers listen to sometimes horrific stories of their students' lives and then find it difficult to live and enjoy their own lives. "Teachers who



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY,
ANTHROPOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY

19 June 2000

Diane M. Crozier
4896 NE 23rd Ave.
Des Moines, IA 50317

Dear Ms. Crozier:

The Human Subjects Research Review Committee has approved your research, subject to minor changes. Please incorporate the following changes and proceed with your research.

- (1) recognize that participants may fear others (former colleagues and supervisors) learning of their comments;
- (2) begin telephone interviews only after giving consent. Presently, it seems that the former may proceed the latter;
- (3) modify the consent form to indicate the time required of participants and to clarify the first sentence of paragraph 3 ("Data collection...").

If you have any questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact me. Best of luck with the project!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "C. Richard King", written over a horizontal line.

C. Richard King
Assistant Professor of Anthropology and
Chair of the Human Subjects Research Review Committee

richard.king@drake.edu

become closely involved and preoccupied with the personal and family problems of their students may increase their vulnerability to burnout” (Greer & Greer as cited in Brownell, 1997, p. 2). Being able to show empathy without being consumed is difficult for teachers who feel their role implies protection of their students. This becomes even more serious since teachers now have the legal responsibility to report suspected abuse. Empathetic stress is another addition to the tension and stress producing roles of teachers.

A second type of stress is vicarious victimization or vicarious trauma. It is the stress or trauma caregivers experience when working with victims of trauma (National Organization for Victim Assistance, n. d.). This type of *secondary trauma* occurs when the caregiver is reminded of his or her own past experiences and becomes a secondary victim and experiences similar trauma symptoms as the primary victim (McCann & Perlman as cited in Iliffe, 2000, p. 1). McCann and Perlman studied the psychological effects on counselors who work with victims of abuse (as cited in Iliffe, 2000, p. 1) . Teachers also become counselors for their students, and after hearing emotionally charged, emotionally shocking material, they are in danger of experiencing vicarious trauma if they have had similar experiences. In another study, counselors working with victims

of abuse reported that along with their clients, they were often more traumatized by the ineffectual legal and mental health systems (Schauban & Fragill as cited in Iliffe, 2000). Teachers, too, may experience this type of stress when they have difficulty with parents, administration, or the legal and health services while trying to get help for a student.

The third type of stress occurs when a person experiences a shock or trauma, commonly called post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Truch (1980) discusses the problems of the stress and symptoms of the “battered teacher,” who is compared with the people who “suffer from combat neurosis” (Bloch as cited in Truch, 1980, p. 6). The problems of disrespect and conflicts between teachers and students were reported earlier in the chapter along with the recent statistics on the incidents of violence in the schools. “Ironically...schools which cater to individuals in their most violence-prone years, are the only institutions in our society other than prisons and mental institutions which require involuntary participation, and their staffs are least prepared for violence” (Wells as cited in Truch, 1980, p. 7). Whether verbally or physically abused, or witness to others’ abuse, teachers are likely to experience degrees of trauma. Special education teachers are even more susceptible to abuse. “Working with students who are

aggressive and violent is very difficult. These students tend to rely on aggression to obtain what they want or to escape things they find aversive” (Goldstein & Glick as cited in Webber, 1994, p. 1).

Teachers are vulnerable to these three types of stress: empathetic stress syndrome, vicarious trauma, or post traumatic stress disorder. Newer teachers may be even more so in their enthusiasm and desire to be helpful.

The symptoms of career burnout.

When new teachers experience disillusionment, frustration, guilt, shame and other stressful situations, the movement toward burnout may begin. Truch (1980) analyzes the symptoms of burnout as it impacts individuals. First, the emotional symptoms may manifest into “depression, irritability, anxiety, yelling, blaming others for their problems, excessive worrying, nightmares, feelings of unreality, apathy, nervousness” (p. 8). Second, behavior patterns may also change. These may include more use of prescriptive or over the counter drugs, increased smoking, drinking or other forms of addiction, impulsive behavior, inability to concentrate, and proneness to accident. Third, physical symptoms may emerge, and because all of the systems of the body are affected by the nervous system, all are affected by stress. Pain is increased, and heart

problems, stomach problems, muscle tension, and headaches and migraines are most commonly associated with high stress and burnout.

In conclusion, when teachers are plagued with these symptoms, their stress affects the quality of their work. The normal difficulties of teaching become even more severe and impede the effectiveness of their work with students. The downward spiral of the teacher and student relationship, "the cyclical and/or reciprocal relationship between the teacher stress/burnout and student/behavior," begins to negate any possibility of teaching and learning (Shaw, Bensky, & Dixon, 1981, p. 3). The goals of teachers are not achieved. The disillusionment, the obstacles, the workload and time, the lack of support, the low salary become the overwhelming costs as described in the summary reasons teachers leave (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987). Burnout ensues. Teachers give up the fight and leave teaching.

Teacher education programs and teacher attrition: recruitment

In an attempt to further understand the problems of beginning teachers and the rate of attrition, focus has turned on both teacher education programs (TEPs) and induction programs for new teachers. The final sections of this chapter review some of the literature related to these programs. The questions

guiding the first part of this review are the following: Are there characteristics of students entering TEPs that might predispose them to successful careers or to disillusionment and career abandonment? Are there practices in the recruitment procedures which might be contributing to later disillusionment and career abandonment?

One of the most comprehensive assessments on the state of education is *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). Describing the process of admitting students to TEPs as "Slipshod Recruitment," one section of the report gives the recent estimates of students who enter teacher education programs, but do not become career teachers:

About 60% of those who start out in undergraduate TEPs complete them; of these, about 60% enter teaching the next year; of these about 70% stay for more than three years. After computing those losses, about 25% of the people entering education programs may be teaching after three years.

(p. 34)

In an earlier section of this chapter, I reviewed Lortie's work (1975) and other researchers who found that some people see education as a fall-back

degree or career and that the ease of entering education programs has added to the problem of attrition. This 1996 report shows the situation continuing, and it concludes that this “passive” acceptance of students “rather than aggressively recruiting...promising candidates” is a serious fault of TEPs resulting in a “hopelessly wasteful system of teacher preparation” (*National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future*, 1996, p. 34).

One approach to studying ways recruitment might become more effective, and consequently reduce attrition, has been to study the characteristics of those students who enter teacher education programs, who complete the programs, and who enter and remain in teaching. Are there characteristics with predictive ability for later success which TEPs might use to guide students into or away from a teaching career? A five-year comprehensive longitudinal study (Pigge & Marso, 1992) analyzed academic records and affective and personal characteristics of 550 students who began a TEP in 1985. Data collected included ACT scores, GPA scores, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills scores, personal and demographic data, and information from The Teacher Concerns Questionnaire, The Attitude Toward Teaching as a Career Scale, and The Teaching Anxiety Scale. The original intent of the study was to find whether or

not the more academically talented people were remaining in TEPs. Earlier studies had reported that the most academically talented students were not staying in teacher education. This study refuted earlier findings. The 65% of students who completed the teacher education program had higher university GPAs and higher scores on basic academic skills than those who did not complete the program. (There was no significant difference in ACT scores between those who completed the program and those who did not.) Further, students who completed the program showed greater assurance about becoming teachers and less concern about the task of teaching. They also “reported more positive attitudes about teaching as a career” when they began their program (Pigge & Marso, 1992, p. 24).

The information gleaned from the study by Pigge and Marso (1992) was enhanced by their follow up study (Pigge & Marso, 1997). They gathered data again two years later which was seven years from these subjects’ entrance into the TEP. Some changes had occurred in the sample although no explanation for the changes was given. After seven years from the beginning of teacher education, this second study (Pigge & Marso, 1997) reported on 551 students of whom 433, or 79%, had completed their program at the original institution and

had become certified to teach. Apparently 14% of the original cohort had gained certification during the additional two years. Only 21% overall did not complete the program.

The findings (Pigge & Marso, 1997) further revealed, however, that although 79% were certified to teach, only 29% were in full-time teaching positions approximately five years following graduation. About 21% were classified in this study as part time, having less than two years full-time teaching within this time period. Some of the characteristics and findings at the end of the seven year period (Pigge & Marso, 1997) were consistent with those at the end of the five year period (Pigge & Marso, 1992). Others were not consistent. First, the strongest predictor of completion of the TEP and transition into teaching was the candidates' high degree of assurance about becoming a teacher at the point of entrance into the TEP. Second, students who reported making the decision to teach during elementary or high school were also more likely to teach. Third, women in elementary education were more likely to teach. Though academic and basic skills scores were higher for those students who completed TEPs compared to those who did not complete their programs, there was not a significant difference in these scores among those teachers who were and were

not teaching seven years later. One other characteristic found in this study (Pigge & Marso, 1997) was the presence of close family members in teaching among the students entering TEPs. Later, it was found that although this influence was associated with completion of the program and entrance into teaching, close family members in teaching were not influential in teachers' decisions to remain in teaching.

Another longitudinal study focused on teacher candidates and their potential for becoming successful teachers. Sweeny, Warren, and Kemis (1991) developed and tested a program, Career Path Model, with one year and five year phases "to help educators understand why teacher education graduates enter or do not enter teaching and why teachers leave or remain in teaching through the early years following entry" (p. 1). A number of variables were measured including personal and background characteristics, perceptions of TEPs and experiences provided, employment factors, and self-reports on career satisfaction. Measurements were taken at graduation, one year later, and at five years following graduation. The sample included 411 graduates from 1987-1989 for the One Year Career Path Model and 369 graduates from 1983-1985 for the Five Year Career Path Model. Two variables were strongly associated with

graduates who were teaching one year after graduation: 62.5% had stated definite plans to teach and had found their student teaching experiences satisfying. Another 6.6% of the 411 candidates also taught the next year following graduation although they had not stated their plans to teach. Of the 369 graduates studied in the Five Year Career Path Model, 48.9% entered and continued teaching. 13.3% taught intermittently while 20.9% never taught and 16.8% had entered and left. Again, the characteristic associated with continuing to teach for the five year group was planning to teach at the time of graduation. Two other interesting findings emerged: Teachers who taught intermittently or who entered and left cited a higher level of dissonance related to salary; those who never taught based their dissatisfaction with teaching on their negative student teaching experience.

International research from the National Institute of Education in Singapore focused on *withdrawal cognition*, explained as thoughts of quitting a profession. Earlier studies found that thinking about leaving a profession was a precursor to actually leaving. Lam, Yoke, and Moo (1995) surveyed 350 preservice interns at the end of their ten week internship, similar to student teaching, to compare withdrawal cognition with work life factors, career

commitment, and job satisfaction. They found that a higher perception of career commitment resulted in increased job satisfaction which reduced the likelihood of withdrawal cognition and withdrawing from teaching.

Although these studies use different terms—commitment to teach, planning to teach, and assurance about becoming a teacher—it appears that a strong mindset toward teaching is strongly associated with completing a TEP, teaching, and remaining, at least for a number of years. If the findings described above are supported by further research, a student's strength of commitment might become part of a screening tool for teacher candidates which would improve the recruitment practices called for in *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Teacher education programs and teacher attrition: curriculum

Recruitment policies and practices have not been the only criticisms of TEPs. The required curriculum and practical experiences have been criticized as insufficient to meet the needs of teachers moving into the current education environment. Criticism has been the catalyst for expansion and improvement throughout the history of public education, and TEPs continue to initiate reforms.

In Society, Schools and Teacher Preparation: A Report of the Commission on the Future Education of Teachers (1988), David Orlosky outlines some of the concerns and movements in teacher education beginning in the late 1800s with the Committee of Ten setting standards for the curriculum. In terse fashion, he continues through the decades as various arguments on the purpose of education and appropriate teaching methods were advanced by passionate educators such as Edward L. Thorndike and John Dewey. The curriculum in TEPs changed as these various ideas came into vogue.

During the 1960s, the culture of the nation was changing with the civil rights movement, followed by desegregation in the schools, the assassination of prominent political leaders, the controversy over the Vietnam War, and changes in the family structure. As these changes along with rising concerns for student achievement made more demands on schools, it became apparent that teachers needed a deeper understanding of learning, a broader range of teaching skills, and more experiences in diverse environments. With the help of federal resources, universities created research and development laboratories to study education issues. As Orlosky (1988) writes, “the early 1970s bore witness to an embarrassing admission by the profession that a substantial research base for

teaching, teacher certification, and teacher preparation was lacking” (p. 7). Since then education research has produced information on the brain and learning, multiple intelligences, *best practices* for optimal learning, and a host of other important findings related to teaching and learning with consequences for expanding teacher education. TEPs have attempted a variety of reforms to keep up with this research (Andrew, 1990; Gideonse, 1993; Teitel, 1997; Valli & Rennert-Ariev, 2000; Zeichner, 1990). Yet, criticism of TEPs continues and the question remains: Are the experiences provided for students in TEPs sufficient to ensure their success as teachers?

In *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996), five “major flaws in teacher preparation” are presented: (a) There is inadequate time in a four year degree program for learning subject matter, human development, learning theory, and effective teaching practices; (b) Theory and course work are disconnected from practical teaching situations, and faculties in subject matter are separate from faculties in education; (c) University faculty often practice traditional lecture methods of teaching, leaving pre-service teachers without role models for active teaching and learning; (d) The curriculum does not require a

deep understanding of subject matter or educational psychology, leaving new teachers without the knowledge base to handle real students and classroom situations; and (e) TEPs continue to prepare students for traditional schools where teachers are isolated in classrooms instead of the interactive educational settings found in many schools (p. 32).

To address the first criticism of the curriculum in TEPs related to the inadequacy of time, outlined in *What Matters Most: Teaching and America's Future* (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996), "about 300 colleges have created graduate-level TEPs that allow for more extended clinical training" (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996, p. 33). This addition of time and extension of the programs have been found to reduce teacher attrition (Andrew, 1990). Andrew's study followed students from the University of New Hampshire over a ten year period, 1976-1986. The random sample of graduates from the four and five year TEPs was compared over time in relation to retention and attrition. Of the sampled 163 graduates of the four year program, 86% entered teaching and 56% continued; of the sampled 144 graduates of the five year program, 93% entered teaching and 75% continued. The study also showed that of those not teaching, a third of the people who

participated in the five year program intend to return compared with only 10% of the people from the four year program. Other differences were evident when comparing the attitudes toward teaching and teaching knowledge and skills with more positive ratings among the five year graduates. Similarly, five year graduates rated their teacher preparation and their cooperating teachers higher than the four year graduates did. "The five year structure, with its higher entry standards and extra year of study, results in students with higher academic qualifications and greater commitment to a career in teaching" (Andrew, 1990, p. 50). Positive teacher education experiences including student teaching experiences and commitment to teaching in their relation to teacher retention are supported in this study.

Induction programs and teacher attrition

Although some teachers are part of an extended teacher education program, the majority of teachers graduate with a four year degree including only a number of weeks of student teaching. They usually enter their teaching careers on their own. Often in the past, depending on the school district or particular school, only informal help and support was given by administrators and colleagues. Fortunately, more public attention has been focused on this *sink or*

swim attitude and the *reality shock* felt by new teachers in their first months and years. In response, a number of induction programs are being developed by school districts and universities particularly aimed at reducing attrition. Based on continuing research into the experiences of new teachers, the general goals of induction programs are as follows:

(a) to improve teaching performance, (b) to increase the retention of promising beginning teachers, (c) to promote the personal and the professional well-being of beginning teachers, (d) to satisfy mandated requirements related to induction, and (e) to transmit the culture of the school system (and the teaching profession) to beginning teachers.

(Huling-Austin, 1989, p. 9)

Induction programs continue to be developed based on these goals by individual school districts, universities, and government agencies. The critical question is this: Are the induction programs meeting the needs of beginning teachers and reducing attrition?

The Des Moines Public School district (DMPS) has recently adopted a two-year induction program produced by Arizona State University. (This program was not used at the time of this study). The first year of the program was

implemented in the 2000-2001 school year. BEST: Beginning Educator Support Team and PEP: Professionals Evolving Practice are the two components of the program (Kortman, Honaker, Enz, Berliner, & Appleton, n. d.). The first year program is divided into phases which have been based on research over the experiences of new teachers: anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, reflection, and a returning to anticipation at the end of the year as teachers begin thinking about the next year. A positive aspect of the first year program is its recognition of the disillusionment phase. New teachers are helped to understand that “after six to eight weeks of nonstop work” it is normal to be discouraged (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993, p. 2). The demands during these first weeks, such as open houses, parent conferences, formal evaluations, and often the end of the *honeymoon period* with students, are discussed with new teachers. This period is associated with self-doubt, low self-esteem, and questioning of their commitment to teaching. Activities aimed at helping them to “balance stress” are provided (BEST, Module 3). However, when the activities suggest that the new teachers create “engaging lesson plans,” they may be implying even more time for lesson planning than normal. This is counter to previous findings indicating a lack of time is a major problem of new teachers.

Other elements of this program also may add to a new teacher's stress over lack of time by requiring very specific and involved projects throughout the year, plus the prescribed hours of classes and discussions with mentors. During the second year, more focus is on teacher knowledge and skills, and no reference is made to disillusionment or stress though previous research documents that the disillusionment phase accompanied by stress may continue throughout several of the first years of teaching (Brock & Grady, 2001). Whether or not this program is effective in meeting the needs of the new teachers in Des Moines Public Schools is not yet known. Evaluation data related to attrition and retention is not yet available.

Only tentative, partial responses exist as answers to the earlier questions on recruitment practices and characteristics of students into teacher education, the adequacy of knowledge and experiences provided in TEPs, and the effectiveness of new induction programs. First, from the research reviewed here, a strong commitment to teach is highly associated with completing teacher education and transitioning into a teaching position. Positive experiences during student teaching also appear to be associated with transitioning to teaching. Second, TEPs are responding to criticism with reforms. Some research shows

that extended programs may have positive results related to teacher satisfaction.

Finally, induction programs are being used by individual school districts, including the Des Moines Public Schools. The effectiveness related to teacher retention is not yet known.

Summary

This investigation through the literature began with the purpose of finding reasons why people who choose to become teachers do not remain in the profession. I used the metaphor of a Trackman, looking for breaks along the path that might be preventing them from a successful long-term career. I have looked backwards through the literature into history across more than three hundred years and traced the evolution of public schools and public school teaching as the nation realized an educated public was necessary to maintain a democracy. It has been an informative journey. I have learned, as Warren (1989) predicted, that the past, the beginnings of public schools in the United States, has greatly influenced the present position of public schooling and particularly the position of its teachers. Because the first public schools were meant to prepare students with a basic education and because the country adhered to an agrarian calendar, the school terms were short, and no special license was required of its teachers.

These factors combined to create a vision of teaching as a temporary steppingstone to a higher profession. Teaching was not a full-time, long term career. It did not have the status of a profession and accordingly, the pay was not above that of a laborer. Young upperclass and middleclass men were often the teachers of upper and middle class students. When young women entered teaching, even though teacher education programs were in place and the school terms had lengthened, the gender issue came into play, and the status and pay remained low. Although some women chose teaching because of their wish for independence, security, or travel, many women also used teaching as a steppingstone to marriage which further influenced the idea that teaching was a temporary position. As teaching became a more "feminized" occupation associated with self-sacrifice and feminine nurturance, fewer men chose teaching. The call to war at the time of the Civil War also affected the lack of men entering teaching. The dominance of women was especially true at the elementary level although this is recently changing with approximately 20% of elementary teachers now men. At the high school level, men and women each make up about 50%, and this has remained throughout the 20th century as public schools across the nation have become standardized. Despite the

stabilization of schools, the education required to be a licensed teacher, and the society's high expectations of teachers in the professional quality of their work and the time commitment required, teachers continue to struggle to gain professional status and the accompanying salary.

Gaining professional status may also be hindered by the fact that teaching continues to be a temporary position by some young people. Social scientists have studied adult development and life cycles which conclude that the young adult period is one of exploration. Because of the ease of entrance into a teaching career, many people choose teaching without the desire or commitment necessary to persist through the difficulties faced as a teacher particularly in the early years of teaching. Studies have shown that women under age 30, people teaching out of their field of expertise, and those perceiving their salaries as low are more likely to leave their careers. For these people, teaching continues to be a steppingstone to marriage or family responsibilities or to other careers. On the other hand, studies have shown that the most prevalent reasons teachers give for entering the profession are the desire to work with young people and the desire to be of service, and approximately half of the people who begin teaching after completing their degrees remain committed after seven years in the field.

Teachers have given other reasons for entering the career: family traditions and family influence, teachers as role models in their own education, vision of teaching as flexible in terms of time, enjoyment of their own education and a specific subject matter, and at the suggestion of other people such as "You would make a good teacher." However, the research on motivation and retention points to commitment to becoming a teacher and assurance about teaching as the most significant to remaining in the career. A successful student teaching experience is also related to the transition to teaching after graduating from a teacher education program.

Concern for a shortage of teachers throughout the 20th century prompted research into teacher attrition which found that the general categories for teachers leaving include retirement, family responsibilities, moving within education, moving to another career, and dissatisfaction with teaching. The latter categories have been broken into two areas for research: problems encountered by beginning teachers and reasons given by newer teachers for leaving. Taken together, four specific problem areas seem to combine in different configurations among newer teachers causing sufficient disillusionment, frustration, and stress to result in career burnout. These problem areas are classroom management

issues, an unreasonable workload and time commitment, a lack of support, and problems related to salary and status.

First, the primary goal of teachers is to teach, understood by teachers as not only promoting the learning of students but also helping and nurturing them. When these goals are thwarted, the frustrations and feelings of disillusionment begin. Classroom management and conflicts with and among students are a major block to teaching. Threats and incidents of violence are also increasing, adding to the problems in classroom management and preventing effective teaching and learning. Further, *out-of-field* teaching is another problem related to attrition. When teachers are in positions out of their area of expertise, the conflicts may be greater, leading to further frustration and stress within teacher/student relationships and in effective teaching. Research into human emotions and stress has produced more specific knowledge about the causes and types of stress. Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSS) is caused by experiencing and/or witnessing trauma. Two other types of stress associated with the helping professions are Empathetic Stress Syndrome and Vicarious Trauma. Teachers are expected to be sympathetic and empathetic listeners, but at times the problems of their students may affect their own emotions, creating stress and

impeding their ability to be effective teachers.

Second, disillusionment and frustration are problems reported by newer teachers because of the amount of work expected and the time required to complete it adequately. Striving for professionalism while attempting to keep up with the intensification of labor witnessed in current society, teachers have tended to also self-impose unrealistic expectations upon themselves. Women are particularly vulnerable to overwork as they are often also responsible for home life. Again, disillusionment, frustration, and stress result when, in their perception, this overload prevents them from working effectively with their students. In addition, two particular emotions, guilt and shame, are related to the workload of teaching. When teachers are not able to meet the expectations of others and or themselves, guilt and shame result. These negative, self-defeating feelings may become the companions of new teachers. These feelings of guilt and shame may be overwhelming as teachers try to meet what they perceive as the expectations for their roles as teachers.

A third source of dissatisfaction among new teachers results from the lack of professional support and respect. Teachers perceive that their first responsibility is to the students and their learning. When other adults linked to the

education of these students are either not supportive or interfering, including parents, teachers feel frustration for themselves and for their students. Likewise, teachers are disillusioned and frustrated when teachers are not consulted when decisions are made within the school, within the school district, or within other governmental bodies related to the teaching and learning of their students.

Finally, the salary associated with a teaching career continues to be a source of disillusionment, frustration, and stress among many teachers. It is a paradoxical issue, however, as some women continue to experience the profession and salary as one which is above many other occupations associated with women. Further, the worth of a salary is always related to geographic locations and specific cost of living indexes and is therefore difficult to assess. Nevertheless, current research shows that salaries among teachers are generally lower than other careers requiring similar levels of education and years of experience. Social status and prestige also play a part in dissatisfaction among teachers although it may be related with other issues including lack of support and low salary rather than exist as an issue by itself.

Research on the progression of stress as it develops into burnout has shown that it begins when high energy and enthusiasm begin to fade. As new

teachers experience these problem areas and feel the associated frustrations and emotions, disillusionment and stress begin. These feelings of disillusioning self-doubt have been considered a normal part of a new teacher's career because teacher education has not yet found a way to adequately prepare people for the real work of a teacher. Criticisms of teacher education programs have included lack of adequate time to prepare teachers in subject matter, classroom management, and teaching methods. Reforms are being attempted, and studies are being conducted on various plans to improve teacher education. Also, school districts are now undertaking induction programs to help new teachers through these first difficult adjustments.

The literature shows that the issues related to teacher retention and attrition are complicated. Young teachers leaving early in their careers may simply be a normal phase in adult development. It may be that assurance about teaching as a career was not strong. Some teachers leave at the request of their districts for a variety of reasons. Other teachers leave because of dissatisfaction with life as a teacher. Dissatisfaction is usually connected with many facets of that life such as low salary and problems deriving from difficulty with students, with support, with time demands and overwork.

Chapter 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

When I began inquiring into the topic of teachers leaving teaching early in their careers, my initial questions were within a quantitative framework. I was aware of the numbers and percentages of the rise in teacher turnover nationwide, and I was interested in finding whether or not this was true of my own Des Moines Public School district (DMPS). After studying the statistics from the public records of the DMPS school board and the State of Iowa's Department of Education as I reported in Chapter 1, I realized that the numbers of teachers leaving early in their careers from DMPS were on a rising, parallel path with the nation. As I studied these records, I noted that though they included reasons for teachers leaving, they did so only in very general and broad categories such as "moving," "spouse transferred," "career change," "personal/family," and "continuing education." No exit interviews were being conducted, and no one was asking these former DMPS teachers about the experiences which might be causing them to leave. Although survey research and some in depth smaller studies into teacher turnover had been conducted nationally and in various parts of the country, few had looked deeply into the daily experiences of newer

teachers, and no studies had been done in the DMPS. The premise for this study was my belief that because of the complex nature of teachers' lives, the reasons for teachers leaving were similarly complex and that these reasons might emerge through a study of their experiences. The purpose, therefore, was to gain a greater understanding of this rise in the rate of attrition through the study of the experiences of former teachers of the DMPS.

Choosing a Qualitative Design

I chose a qualitative design to study the reasons teachers are leaving the profession because "the emphasis in qualitative methods is on *depth and detail*: in-depth interviews, detailed descriptions" of participants' experiences (Patton, 1987, p. 46) and the focus is "on process, meaning, and understanding" (Merriam, 1998, p. 8). Furthermore, "*the product of a qualitative study is richly descriptive*. Words...are used to convey what the researcher has learned" (p. 8). Clandinin and Connelly concur with this description of a qualitative design as they explain the relationship of the participants, their experiences and stories, and the researcher: "people by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives, whereas narrative researchers describe such lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience" (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994,

p. 416). Through this study, I wanted to listen to the thoughts and feelings of former teachers as they told the stories of their experiences of becoming and being teachers. I wanted to explore with them their understanding as they recounted their choices and their ultimate decisions to leave. Finally, I wanted to assume the challenge of the qualitative researcher. Merriam (1998) explains that *“the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument”* (p. 7). Because the “self-as-instrument’ inevitably means one must create ongoing meaning out of the evolving and evolved data,...the naturalistic researcher must come to rely on his/her own talents, insights, and trustworthiness, and, in the end, go public with the reasoning that engendered the results” (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & McCormack Steinmentz, 1991, p. 86). I wanted to retell the lived stories of these former teachers and express the meaning that might be learned from them.

In *Naturalistic Inquiry* (1985) Lincoln and Guba explain that “data analysis is open ended and inductive for the naturalistic researcher...and aims to ‘make sense’ of the data in ways that will, first, facilitate the continuing folding, unfolding of the inquiry, and second, lead to a maximal understanding...of the phenomenon being studied” (p. 224-225). Initially, I chose the guidelines of

grounded theory methodology to study and analyze the data, corresponding to the precepts of qualitative design by Strauss (1987). It is a “style of doing qualitative analysis to ensure conceptual development and density...for achieving better comprehension of a social phenomena” (p. 8). In addition, the goal for the research study was situated within the goal of grounded theory: “to generate a theory that accounts for a pattern of behavior which is relevant and problematic for those involved” (p. 34). The guidelines were “inductive, pragmatic, and highly complete...to provide relevant information which were useful” for the study (Patton, 1987, p. 39-40). As described throughout this methodology chapter, the sampling procedures, methods of analysis, “theoretical saturation, [and] memoing...[used are] operations [that] are essential to the development of densely woven and tightly integrated theory” (Strauss, 1987, p. 24-25). One of the critical components of grounded theory methodology established by Strauss (1987) is “the need for developing many concepts and their linkages in order to capture a great deal of the variation that characterized the central phenomena” (p. 7). Therefore, twenty former DMPS teachers were interviewed with the intent of investigating extensively their accumulated experiences in order to understand the thoughts, feelings, and actions that

influenced their decisions to leave teaching. At this beginning stage, I was aware of the need for triangulation in forming trustworthiness of the study. I attempted to build “checks and balances into a design through multiple data collection strategies...aimed at increasing the strength and rigor of an evaluation” (Patton, 1987, p. 60). Specific themes and patterns did begin to emerge as participants told their experiences and stories which were captured on audiotape. As I read and reread the transcripts and continued to collect data through interviews with participants, I became acquainted with the methods of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) as a way to more thoroughly study, analyze, and come to an understanding of their stories:

Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experience. It is a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. An inquirer enters this matrix in the midst and progresses in this same spirit, concluding the inquiry still in the midst of living and telling, reliving and retelling, the stories of the experiences that make up people’s lives....Simply stated...narrative inquiry is stories lived and told. (p. 20)

I also appreciated the understanding that “as researchers, we also tell another kind of story; that is, we try to tell or represent the story of the research project” (Clandinin & Connelly as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 418). The remainder of this chapter on methodology is my story of how this study was conducted. I believe that choosing a qualitative design and blending the methodologies of grounded theory and narrative inquiry were the best means to come to a greater understanding of the experiences which converged to lead teachers to leave their chosen careers.

Entry into the Field and Selection of Participants

When I began this study, I talked with the Director of Human Resources for the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) and informally presented the concept of the study. I was directed to the Evaluation Department which coordinates and oversees research studies. At that time all research studies were to be approved by a Research Committee. However, after discussing my study with a member of the Evaluation Department and submitting a brief description, I received a letter stating I did not need formal consent from the Research Committee of the DMPS since the information and participation I would seek to conduct the study was part

of the public records of the DMPS School Board minutes, DMPS telephone books, Iowa Department of Education, and other public sources (Appendix A).

Next, I submitted my research proposal to Drake University Human Subjects Review Committee (Appendix B). The proposal included not only the purpose and expected procedures for the study, but also the Consent Form used to protect the participants' rights. The Consent Form followed the requirements of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These rights and requirements are explained succinctly in Creswell (1998).

Their right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time.

The central purpose of the study and the procedures to be used in data collection.

Comments about protecting the confidentiality of the respondents.

A statement about known risks associated with participation in the study.

The expected benefits to accrue to the participants in the study.

A place for them to sign and date the form (a place for the researcher to sign and date also may be offered). (p. 115-116)

When I received permission from the Drake University Internal Review Board, I began the search for participants. I first used DMPS phone books, randomly choosing a particular school, culling lists a few years apart, looking for names no longer listed in subsequent years. “The grounded theorist starts with a homogeneous sample, individuals who have commonly experienced the action or process” (Creswell, 1998, p. 117), sometimes labeled “selective sampling” (Strauss, 1987, p. 274). As I discovered the names no longer listed in the school directories, I used a public telephone book to further search for them. When I found possible participants, I used a telephone protocol to screen these former teachers according to the basic criteria for the initial purposeful or selective sampling which were previously set (Appendix C). This included (a) teaching for seven or fewer years and (b) leaving teaching from the DMPS between the years 1990 and 2001. As explained in Chapter 1, I chose the criteria of seven or fewer years based on an earlier study that found that the median life of teachers was seven years (Wong & Wong, 1991). Further, I chose the recent decade since the DMPS experienced dramatic changes such as increased diversity, increased numbers of families in lower socioeconomic situations, and increased numbers of families from other parts of the world (Jones & Pilkington, 2001). Teachers’

experiences in earlier decades might not be representative of teachers' experiences during the 1990s.

Through this initial screening process, I found the first willing participants who agreed to be interviewed for this study. I sent a letter that again told of the purpose of the study along with the Consent Form (Appendix D). I then made a follow-up call to arrange the time and place of the interview. When we met for the interview, I took the signed copy and left a second copy for their files.

Strauss (1987) describes grounded theory as "a style of doing qualitative analysis that includes a number of distinct features such as theoretical sampling" (p. 5) which he defines as a sample "directed by the evolving theory...harnessed to the making of comparisons between and among those samples" (p. 21). This type of sampling "directs the data collection and comparative analysis is done from the word go" (p. 23). To comply with this feature of grounded theory methods, I began reading and analyzing the experiences of my participants from the first interviews. "The key point about theoretical sampling is this: Once you have even the beginnings of a theory (after the first days of data collection and analysis), then you begin to leave selective sampling and move directly to the theoretical sampling" (p. 274). To aid my analysis and expand selection of the

participants, I developed a large wall matrix as I categorized the various differences and similarities among participants such as gender, age, marital/family status, information on teacher education programs and pre-service placements, years of teaching and content levels, classroom or special education positions, elementary, middle or high school placements, information on qualifications and/or certification, pre-teaching work experiences and post-teaching work experiences (Appendix E).

I also expanded the methods of searching for and acquiring participants. I worked in the DMPS district offices and used the School Board records, listing all teachers who had left the district from 1990-2001. In some cases the numbers of years taught and reasons for leaving were available, but the descriptors were general, and they were often worded differently from year to year. As I continued to solicit participants, I was mindful of both Strauss' requirements for theoretical sampling and Lincoln and Guba (1985) who suggest that "the sample is to be selected in ways that will provide the broadest range of information possible...a sample that is expanded until redundancy with respect to information is reached" (p. 234). I increased the initial criteria to include (c) teachers who were diverse in number of years taught, elementary and secondary levels, classroom and special

education, and certified and not certified for their positions and (d) teachers who were diverse in their personal backgrounds including age, gender, pre-service positions, levels of education, and educational institutions including teacher education programs.

After screening over sixty former teachers, and following the telephone interviewing, data collection, and analysis processes to guide the sample, I chose twenty participants who met the above criteria for further personal interviewing. They included ten women and ten men; sixteen were married, thirteen with children; four were single. The oldest participant was fifty-two while the youngest was twenty-five. Fourteen had taught in regular education classrooms while six were considered special education teachers, with both resource and self-contained teachers represented. Six participants were at the elementary level, four at the middle school level, five at the high school level, and five participants had been at both the elementary and middle school levels during their careers. They each had entered the DMPS in the late 1980s or during the 1990s; none had taught more than seven years. They had attended both large and small, public and private, in state and out of state colleges and universities, and

participated in a variety of teacher education programs and pre-service experiences.

Data Collection

Data collected for this study include (a) school district documents; (b) initial conversations with more than sixty former teachers; (c) field notes and my personal journals “full of details and moments of...inquiry lives in the field” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 104); (d) teachers’ twenty transcribed audiotaped in-depth personal interviews situating me in the teachers’ stories; and (e) one participant’s journal as he worked through his decision to leave. I believe these data sources fulfill the requirements of both grounded theory and narrative inquiry methodology.

To obtain the data described above, I began by following the guidelines of theoretical sampling (Strauss, 1987). As I worked through the lists of teachers in the DMPS school board records who were retiring, taking leaves of absences, or resigning during the 1990s, I took care in recording all of the information given such as grade level, school, and so forth. From the information given, I usually cross checked the names with older district telephone books to find teachers who might fit my first criteria of seven or fewer years of teaching. I also noted any

listed reasons for leaving or any other information that might help me find eligible participants according to the narrowing criteria dictated by theoretical sampling as the study progressed. The next phase was telephoning possible participants. I informally identified myself and discussed the study and the prerequisites for participation, making notes of each conversation. For prospective participants, I continued with the telephone protocols and collection process as outlined above in the section on Participant Selection.

From the beginning of the research process, I wrote my thoughts, feelings, observations, and reflections, keeping short notations during the conversations and interviews with participants. Later I typed these into summary reflections. I also kept a journal of my daily life. "Autobiography and memoir are recognized forms of research text" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 101). Included were the ideas and analytic questions and possibilities emerging from the mounting data. These types of personal and thoughtful notes, observations, and journals are fundamental to the qualitative inquiry process. The researcher as the research instrument is to become "steeped in the data and at the same time employs devices to ensure breadth and depth of vision...[including]...the compilation of a field diary, a running commentary on the research with reflections on one's

personal involvement; marginal comments on field notes as thoughts occur on reading and rereading them" (LeCompte, Millroy, & Preissle, 1992, p. 387). Both grounded theory and narrative inquiry methods depend on the continual creation of these personal writings as part of the data. Strauss (1987) names these types of personal writing "theoretical memos" (p. 18), or "writing in which the researcher puts down questions, hypotheses, summary of codes, etc." (p. 22). This process of thinking and writing serve "indispensable functions in discovering, developing, and formulating a grounded theory" (p. 109). He also recognized the usefulness of "varieties of memos, varying considerably by phase of the researcher's thought...experience [with the subject of study]...and the research itself" (p. 110). In their work on narrative inquiry, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the term "field texts" to describe the personal writing of observations, thoughts, and feelings regarding the work of the study. "Field texts help fill in the richness, nuance, and complexity of the landscape, returning the reflecting researcher to a richer, more complex, and puzzling landscape than memory alone is likely to construct" (p. 83). Through the writing of field texts, the researcher is "mindful of working within the three dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 92) which requires that one "be aware of where [he or she] and our participants are placed

at any particular moment—temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and the social” (p. 89). Again, the methods of each of these qualitative styles rely on the researcher’s thoughts as an important part of the data and necessary for later analysis.

The primary source of information in the field was through in-depth personal interviews in the form of conversations with twenty former teachers. In Chapter 4, a more detailed account of my experiences in the interviewing phase of the research is presented; however, for purposes of describing the methodology for this chapter, I followed the guidelines generally established for qualitative design. “The use of the interview as a research method is nothing mysterious: An interview is a conversation that has a structure and a purpose. It goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday conversation, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p. 6). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) assert the importance of conversation because it involves listening.

The listener’s response may constitute a probe into experience that takes the representation of experience far beyond what is possible in an

interview. Indeed, there is probing in conversation, in-depth probing, but it is done in a situation of mutual trust, listening, and caring for the experience described by the other. (p. 109)

During the conversations with participants, I usually began with informally gathering biographical information. Before I asked them to talk about their experiences, we discussed the consent form which they signed, and I asked for their permission to audiotape the interview. "Conversations and interviews are clearly two of the interactions during which a researcher may wish to use a tape recorder...to capture the interpersonal-exchange dynamics...[and it]...frees the researcher to participate in the conversation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 109). The questions to help us begin the conversations were very general: When did you begin thinking about becoming a teacher and/or tell me about your experiences as a teacher. I had a prepared semi-structured protocol for probing questions during the interviews and to use as a reminder to myself for taking observation notes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) (Appendix F). However, I found that most participants talked freely, covering the topics without the necessity of more formal probing questions. Keeping in mind the precepts of "the three-dimensional inquiry space" which requires that "one asks

questions...that addresses both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward, and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future," the participants and I talked about their experiences of becoming teachers, their experiences as teachers, their decisions to leave, and their present situations (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). I also asked the participants their reflective views on their experiences and their perspectives and goals for their futures. They discussed their personal thoughts and feelings, as well as looking outward at the social problems of teachers leaving teaching.

What was initially unexpected in the interviews was the intensity of emotion and stress that often developed as people talked about their experiences of teaching and their decision processes in choosing to quit. As I talked with more and more participants, I became aware of a rhythm of the stress levels during the conversation and planned to leave time for "bringing the interview down from the intellectual or emotional high without losing the openness of discussion" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 136). I followed the guidelines of Rubin and Rubin (1995) which suggest that "after eliciting depth and emotional honesty, you don't want to leave interviewers exposed, but help them calm down and feel protected again" (p. 136-137). After becoming familiar with the emotional

aspect of this topic for some participants, I usually saved some biographical questions or a lighter part of the subject matter already discussed on which to return and close the interview.

Data Management

How data are stored and retrieved is the heart of data management;...a good storage and retrieval system is critical for keeping track of what data are available; for permitting easy, flexible, reliable use of data...at different points in time over a project's life; and for documenting the analysis made so that the study, in principle, be verified or replicated. (Miles & Huberman as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 430)

To this end, several systems were created for the various types of data collected. I created a notebook filled with all of the lists and notes taken from the school district documents and subsequent telephone conversations with former teachers. This notebook also holds the quantitative information regarding teachers leaving the DMPS. In addition, other state and public information including newspaper accounts of the problem of teachers leaving are collected in labeled folders.

At the time the first former teacher agreed to be a part of the study, I began a folder for all of the information generated. I used a numbering and naming system for the transcriptions and observation notes in respect for the participants' anonymity. On the front of each folder, I kept a running dated record of interactions with the participant beginning with the initial phone call, written letters, follow-up calls, place and time of interview, and thank you note. I included copies of the telephone protocol, follow-up letters, the consent form, the semi-structured interview protocol form, a copy of my reflection/field notes, and the original copy of the interview transcript.

Field notes and my personal journal writing which documents my experiences throughout the field study were also collected in a notebook as well as on a separate disc and saved in my computer files. The actual audiotapes of the interviews were placed in containers for safekeeping. After the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim, I made an additional four copies of the transcriptions. The original went into the participant's folder, two copies were for safekeeping, one copy was put into a notebook for the initial "open coding" (Strauss, 1987) phase of analysis, and one copy was saved for later use in separating the

emerging themes. As themes emerged, I used a color-coded folder system to designate similar themes emerging from the data.

Coding and Data Analysis

Glaser and Strauss (1967) created the basic definitions, theory, and procedures of a qualitative research design that included a methodology to achieve a formal theory *grounded* in data. In a more recent work, Strauss (1987) made the data analysis component even more specific by describing a coding paradigm that begins with “open coding” at the onset of data collection “to produce concepts that seem to fit the data...to open up the inquiry” (p. 28). I appreciated the definition and explanation of Miles and Huberman (1994) as I began to understand this coding process.

A code is an abbreviation or symbol applied to a segment of words—most often a sentence or paragraph of transcribed field notes—in order to classify the work. Codes are categories....They are retrieval and organizing devices that allow the analyst to spot quickly, pull out, then cluster all the segments relating to the particular question, hypothesis, concept, or theme. Clustering sets the stage for analysis. (p. 56)

As indicated earlier, I read and reread the verbatim transcripts from my very first interviews “in order to facilitate the emergent design, grounding of theory, and emergent structure of later data collection phases” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 242). Miles and Huberman (1994) describe this “first level coding [as] a device for summarizing segments of data” (p. 68). These segments became the initial categories. I continued to select participants, conduct audiotaped interviews, and after having them transcribed, read and analyzed them “because analysis is part and parcel of the ongoing, intertwined process that powers data collection” (Ely et al., 1991, p. 86). I also understood their sentiment and description: “There is no escape. Making categories means reading, thinking, trying out tentative categories, changing them when others do a better job, checking them until the very last piece of meaningful information is categorized and, even at that point, being open to revising the categories” (p. 145).

For Strauss (1987) this phase of creating initial categories termed “open coding” has specific requirements. The first two are to ask questions of the data and to “*analyze the data minutely*” (p. 30-31). I read carefully, asking the meaning of the segments, “sorting and defining and defining and sorting” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 133) and giving names to the specific ideas and concepts as

they emerged in the transcripts. Strauss' (1987) third guideline is to write frequent "theoretical" memos, which I did. Finally, he advises not to "assume the analytic relevance of any traditional variable such as age, sex, social class, race, until it emerges as relevant" (p. 32). The underlying idea is that through this open coding process, the codes or categories will become saturated (no new relevant ideas are forthcoming) which is the basis of the "grounding" in data. I found that as my conversations with participants continued, I was first hearing and then reading the same experiences again and again, and through the analysis process, the codes did become saturated.

Open coding or first level coding actually alternates with another level of coding named "axial coding" (Strauss, 1987) and "pattern coding" (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This phase of coding required that I read through the transcripts around one code, category, or concept at a time. "Pattern coding is a way of grouping [the earlier coded material] into a smaller number of overarching themes or constructs" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 68). For example, one of my codes was "teacher education program." After discovering this concept and naming it as a category, I reread all of the transcripts looking specifically again for items relating to teacher education programs, creating a saturated category.

Finally, this coding evolved into “selective coding...coding to only those codes that relate to the core codes in sufficiently significant ways as to be used in a parsimonious theory” (Strauss, 1987, p. 33), the purpose of data analysis.

Bogdan and Biklen (1997) define data analysis: “the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding...working with data, organizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned” (p. 145). In grounded theory methodology, “this process of taking information from data collection and comparing it to emerging categories is called the **constant comparative** method of data analysis” (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). In my practice of this comparative method, I read and coded looking for “patterns, narrative threads, tensions and themes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 132). When the coding was finished and I had collapsed the segments into a logical sequence of categories, I began to cut the transcripts apart and combined the like segments. At this point, I had twenty categories which, through analysis, were arranged into four broad theme areas. As these came together, they fell into the three dimensional inquiry space outlined in narrative inquiry. These theme areas moved back and forth across

time from the participant's selection of teaching through their teacher education programs and their teaching experiences to a discussion of their present situation and future goals. Moreover, as they described their events and experiences, we reflected upon them both in their personal and social significance. These themes—experiences and reflections—are reported in the findings in Chapter 4. It is in this reporting that I turned specifically to the methods of narrative inquiry presented by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). "Issues of audience, voice, and signature were woven together with issues of form" as I put together and told the stories of my participants (p. 165). I found that metaphor was "helpful in the creation of narrative form" for reporting some of the themes of this study (p. 163).

Trustworthiness

Establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study involves several issues, but the most important are the design, the methodology, and the integrity of the researcher to follow the chosen procedures. "Triangulation is less a tactic than a mode of inquiry" as discussed by Miles and Huberman (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 438). As the researcher, I tried to follow their ideas "by self-consciously setting out to collect and double-check findings, using multiple sources and modes of evidence...[to] build the triangulation process into ongoing

data collection...by seeing or hearing multiple instances of [findings] from different sources, using different methods, and by squaring the findings with others with which it should coincide” (p. 438). In their book *Qualitative Data Analysis* (1994), Miles and Huberman also wrote that “in qualitative research, issues of instrument validity and reliability ride largely on the skills of the researcher” (p. 38). As a novice researcher, I have tried to document in this chapter the rigor with which I conducted this research. Earlier, I described my interest in this study which aligns with some of the “markers of a good qualitative researcher-as-instrument” described by Miles and Huberman (1994): “some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study [and] strong conceptual interests” in the study (p. 38). Although I was aware of the cautions of doing research in my own area (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994), there is recognition of the value of the knowledgeable researcher in the capacity of the research instrument (Markus, 1997, and Giorgi, 1996 cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Strauss (1987) also noted that strong feelings for doing the research have resulted in worthwhile studies. I believe that my understanding of the nature of teaching and my familiarity with the DMPS has

enabled me to more thoroughly explore the experiences of the participants, interpret their responses, and analyze the data.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

“Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, there lies your vocation.”

Aristotle (385-322 BC)

I chose the title for my dissertation as an expression of my faith that we are seekers of knowledge and truth: “If I tell them, will they listen? Voices of Former Teachers.” I believed this title would be a reminder to my readers and myself that peoples’ stories are sacred, that they are sharing a part of themselves that must be honored as well as heard. I also hoped this title would encourage my participants to trust me to listen carefully and retell their stories accurately so that together we might reach the goal of adding to the understanding of why teachers leave teaching. As a researcher probing and analyzing the experiences of these participants as data, my first responsibility is to respect their thoughts, their feelings, and their stories as they were entrusted to me.

Two other aspects of my title are important. First, the word *tell* is not only *to inform*, the most used meaning of the word, but also *to discover by observation*. As I met with my participants and they reflected on becoming

teachers and their lives as teachers, we were observing and discovering together the meaning that these experiences had for them. Second, the words *them* and *they* are intentionally ambiguous, referring to the many people that I hope will hear, consider, and accept these experiences as motivation for action particularly in the areas of teacher education and improving our system of education as it relates to new teachers.

To embark on a qualitative research study is to embark on an unknown journey. In the first section of this chapter, I tell the story of my journey as I foraged into the unknown, meeting my participants and discovering who they were as they told me their stories of choosing teaching and becoming teachers. The second section of the chapter reveals their experiences and their decisions to leave their teaching careers. The third section is their reflection of their teacher education programs in view of their actual experiences as teachers. Finally, the fourth section includes participants' contrasting views between teaching and their current situations. The chapter ends with some of the participants' thoughts about returning to teaching, followed by a summary section.

Becoming Teachers

"It was maybe something where I could make a difference." Sally

Twenty former Des Moines public school teachers agreed over the course of two years to be interviewed for this research study. Briefly, in review, there were ten women and ten men; sixteen were married, thirteen with children; four were single. The oldest participant was fifty-two while the youngest was twenty-five. Fourteen had taught in regular education classrooms while six were considered special education teachers. Both resource and self-contained classroom teachers are represented. Six participants were at the elementary level, four at the middle school level, five at the high school level, and five participants had been at both the elementary and middle school levels during their careers. They each had entered the DMPS in the late 1980s or 1990s; none had taught more than seven years. All of these former teachers were genuinely interested in being a part of this study and in reaching the goal of greater understanding of why teachers leave. Of course, on that first snowy night, pulling into a neatly shoveled driveway and knocking on the back door of a stranger's home, I didn't know all of this. Nor did I have any idea of the rewarding experiences in store for me as I came to know these people and as they came to

know me.

That snowy evening, I met the first participant, Dorothy, a young married woman with no children although she was looking forward to having a family in the future. She had seriously thought about the topic after reading my letter of introduction and the consent form. She gave a great deal of information about her experiences, and it was a rewarding beginning to this study. A few days later as the snow was beginning to melt, I drove out to a home in the country to meet the second participant, Janet. Although she was a few years older with three children, I found that both Dorothy's and Janet's journeys to become teachers began in similar ways. My open-ended interview question was very simple: "Tell me about becoming a teacher." I talked with each of them in their kitchens which were both neatly and creatively decorated. Janet told of recently redoing hers with "apples" as the theme especially for teachers. Dorothy's cat and Janet's two-year old twins became part of the conversations at times. Both participants signed consent forms and talked animatedly about their experiences. They had each attended an Iowa university after high school and graduated with degrees in elementary education (EIEd). Dorothy had added a minor in special education (SpEd). She had a successful student teaching experience in a Des Moines

suburban elementary school. She commented that “I had a SpEd room, and [my cooperating teacher] had a roster [number of students] that fit in well” which enabled her to work with them successfully. Janet, though, had had mixed student teaching experiences. “My first assignment, the first teacher that I had, I loved. She was wonderful, and my supervisor was great.” Her second placement was not as positive, “It was one of those things that I don’t think we just hit it off...she didn’t like the fact that I wore pants and things like that.” But both women, single at the time, were enthusiastic about finding teaching jobs. They became substitute teachers for the DMPS after graduation “to get my foot in the door,” as Dorothy said. Both women had looked forward to becoming teachers. Janet commented, “That’s what I truly love, and I know ever since I was a little, little girl, I used to play school and be the teacher.”

Jeff, Allen, Terrance, and Jim, the next four participants, traveled different paths to their teaching careers. One commonality, however, was that their mothers had all been teachers.

I met with Jeff in his home on a late afternoon. He was happy to be in charge of his new daughter while his wife kept an appointment. I sat at the kitchen table—in another beautifully decorated, warm and friendly kitchen—while

Jeff walked or stood, and talked with his baby girl in his arms. Teaching was a second career move for him. After high school, he earned a business-related degree from an Iowa university in 1992. "I worked there [a business] for six or seven months. I did not like what I was doing, and I decided to get my teaching license in biology." He spent the next two and a half years back at another Iowa university and had a successful student teaching experience in a Des Moines high school, and graduated in the late 1990s with a secondary degree in science education, ready for a teaching career. He immediately gained a middle-school position in science.

Allen was a former colleague, and I invited him to my home for the interview. He had kept a journal as he made his decision to leave teaching, and he brought that along. As we talked, I learned that he had decided to become a teacher during his third year of college as he attended a large university in a near-by state. Two enjoyable experiences had merged to lead him to his choice. Having excelled in foreign language in high school, he had continued to excel in foreign language as his major in college. During those college summers, he worked in a camp and found he enjoyed his relationship with kids. "I was thinking that I wanted to do something with kids, and I was more interested in the

counseling angle of it...so I went for a psychology major” along with his language major. Although he wanted to work with younger students, he and his parents were anxious for graduation and an end to out-of-state tuition, so he settled on the more expedient route: a secondary education (SecEd) degree in his foreign language specialty. I found this entry in his journal: “I remember deciding that teaching was a noble profession and that there were opportunities for creativity and performance...I was intrigued by the process of language acquisition, particularly of studying first language acquisition to find a more effective way to learn a second language.” He spent the year following graduation substitute teaching in DMPS and landed a contract in the same district a year later. He did make this clear in our interview: “I knew that I just wanted to do it for awhile. To teach for awhile.”

Although Terrance was not the first person I was able to interview, unknowingly he was the inspiration for this study. Months before, when I was contemplating the need for a study of this topic and its feasibility, I was standing in line behind a handsome, well-spoken young man at the teachers’ credit union and overheard his conversation with an acquaintance. He proudly exclaimed that he had just “quit teaching” after seven years as an elementary teacher. Two

thoughts raced simultaneously through my mind: "He fits my criteria!" and "What a terrible loss to our school district and to kids." I couldn't resist. I wanted to know why. Why had he quit? I ignored my nervously beating heart and timidly tapped him on the shoulder. He turned, and I introduced myself and explained that I was possibly going to do a study of teachers who were leaving the profession, and if so, would he be willing to be interviewed as a participant. He enthusiastically agreed and gave me his new "business card." As I took that card, I felt I had made a commitment to him and to myself to find out what was happening in my profession.

When the afternoon came for the interview, Terrance was another father in charge of a daughter. She was four years old and waiting patiently to be taken swimming. We talked in the dining room, in another small and lovely home. I learned that he had gone to college out of state on an athletic scholarship and had chosen sports training as his first career. After coming to Iowa, he decided to teach, took more classes and acquired an EIE license. During his student teaching in DMPS, he wrote letters to the superintendent, other administrators, and all of the elementary principals inviting them to observe him during his student teaching. Some did accept, including the DMPS Superintendent.

Terrance commented, "I think they came to see who was writing this letter...I was very persistent in wanting to teach." And he did make an impression. He soon won a contract.

Teaching was actually the third career change for Jim. Leaving college after his first year, he tried factory work, but he soon returned. This time he took a job as a dormitory resident advisor, and he found he enjoyed helping younger students. He completed a degree in SecEd at an Iowa university, but he moved out of state and became a social worker for a few years. When he, his wife, and two children moved to the Des Moines area in the early 1990s, he decided to teach since his student teaching experience in a DMPS high school "was a piece of cake...the kids were all very motivated, for the most part pretty well behaved and weren't much of a discipline problem." He felt confident and prepared for the position that he accepted in a middle school, although it was not in his certificated field. As we talked at the end of the interview about the beautiful antiques in the large living room of his older traditional home, he remembered that when he was teaching and living on a teacher's salary, he and his family were living in a tiny, 900 sq. ft. house.

Barbara and Judy, two more willing participants, followed Janet's pattern:

high school, college, teaching, marriage, a baby, and now a first home. I asked about choosing teaching. Barbara's mother had been a teacher, and she told me it was "kind of in the family...and [I] knew it was a good job." Judy's parents were still teaching, and though they had discouraged her, she rebelled: "I was interested in [a foreign language] all the way through high school, so I decided...I really wanted to do it, and I didn't know anything about the business world because no one in my family was in the business world, so I went into teaching." After positive student teaching experiences, each young woman had graduated from an Iowa university in the mid-1990s, and was excited to enter her first classroom—Barbara in EIEd and Judy in her foreign language.

Sally's story was a little different. Everyone in her family was in business, and she followed that path until her second semester of her junior year at a large Iowa university. Taking a fifth semester of classes, she earned her EIEd certificate majoring in math. Members of her family "were all very supportive, and they all thought that was great that I can work and not care about the money. To them it was always such a big sacrifice; they thought of it as a position that was really underpaid but so important." I visited with Sally and her three children in a large, well-appointed suburban home. She talked with fond memories of

choosing teaching and her career. "I just knew that [teaching] was something I would enjoy." Sally did substituting and teaching in another state before moving to Des Moines where she easily found an elementary position. "So I think then I thought that this would be a career that I would get a lot out of. And it was maybe something where I could make a difference."

My interviews with Barbara, Judy, and Sally were only a few sunny afternoons apart, and as I was rereading my field notes, I thought about the similarities in their homes and then the similarities in all of the fourteen homes I had visited for my interviews. I realized I had used similar words: neat, tastefully decorated, warm atmosphere, evidence of pride, perfect and organized, family antiques, evidence of a lot of love. In one journal entry I wrote, "I include these descriptions of homes because they all have been similar in the fact that they obviously are arranged with pride in similar values: organization, cleanliness, a sense of beauty, culture." Several of my participants talked about their decorating, their antiques, their remodeling projects, and I was given tours in two homes. Clearly, for these fourteen former teachers, environment was important. I wondered as I wrote in my journal what part environment might play in their feelings and experiences related to their teaching careers.

My next participant was no exception. Todd, his wife, and two children had recently moved from their “starter house” to a very nice upper-middle class neighborhood of newer homes. It was a beautiful summer evening, and his yard was filled with flowers. We sat in another comfortable, welcoming kitchen and talked for a long time. He had graduated from a small private college in Iowa, earning a degree in social studies and SecEd. He had been excited about teaching history. “I enjoy getting up and talking about history and historical data and economics and government—that’s what I wanted to do and it was just no question about it.” After teaching for one year in Chicago, he returned to Des Moines to substitute and later to take a position as a hall monitor. Todd showed his tenacity while waiting five years as an associate and substitute before his chance came for his first real full-time contract. He accepted this position even though it was not in his field. He agreed to earn a special education degree while teaching in a special self-contained special education program, continuing his wait for an opening in history.

As I continued to meet and hear the stories of the participants, I became more aware of both the similarities and the differences among them. When I visited with two more former women teachers, Linda and Patty, I found that they

had both decided early in their lives that they wanted to be teachers, much like Dorothy, Janet, and Barbara. Linda remembered, "I think it came from...when I was in second grade, I had a teacher who was a brand new teacher to the district...and she was young, beautiful, kind, and she was...my inspiration. I just wanted to be like her." Linda worked with children in a variety of capacities after graduating from high school through the next ten years. Eventually, she worked her way through a weekend and night school teacher preparation program that an Iowa university offers in EIED and acquired a DMPS position. For Patty, it was the influence of her family. "I come from a long line of teachers. My grandparents, my aunt...my great grandma....I remember being in kindergarten...we went around the room and said what we wanted to be, and I always knew I wanted to be a teacher because my mom was...and I looked up to my mom." Patty earned her secondary degree from an Iowa university, and like Todd, substituted and took a position as an associate, waiting four years for an opening in her area. Linda and Patty had each started their families and recently moved into new suburban neighborhoods. Patty proudly gave me a tour of her new home.

I met Ron at a local mall. He sandwiched in an interview with me during a short visit home to Des Moines. He had recently married and left the city and

teaching. I learned that Ron had attended a small, private Iowa college in the early 90s, and his decision-making process that led him to become a teacher resembled Allen's scenario. First, his mother was a teacher as well as several other family members. Second, while in college, he worked with some young people at a summer camp and found that he enjoyed them. Third, he excelled in his chosen foreign language. "And I first started thinking about teaching, I think, when I didn't know what else to do with a [foreign language] degree." He earned a K-12 degree in his chosen foreign language—in spite of a very challenging student teaching experience, which he could laugh about in hindsight:

The first day I was supposed to teach, I got so nervous that I stayed up late the night before studying the lesson plan and reading the books over and over and that doesn't do you any good. But, the next day I was so nervous that I literally got a serious pain in my chest, and I got sick, and I ended up going to the medical clinic because I could not move...I had a hard time getting to my car, and it was kind of scary. But after that, I did it....But it wasn't a great experience. It wasn't like I said, "Yes, this is awesome!" Instead, I said, "These kids are terrible, and I don't know what to do with them."

Nevertheless, he overcame his qualms about teaching and like others went on to substitute teach for two years while waiting for an opening. One did come at the middle school level, but it was not ideal. Only a portion of his classes would be in his certified field. At the middle-school level, the law allows certified teachers to teach in any area.

One of the most reflective participants was Richard. I visited with him on an early evening in late October. We sat out on his deck under falling autumn leaves, and the season itself and the waning light lent a more serious and sometimes melancholy mood to our conversation. He had finished high school in Des Moines in the early 1980s and joined the military. He rose in rank and attended training to become an instructor involving nuclear and mechanical engineering. After six years, he decided to change directions. He came home to Des Moines and used the GI Bill to pay for the four and a half years he took to earn his teaching degree at a large state university. He commented, “I remembered how much I enjoyed my math classes in school and...how much I enjoyed teaching while I was in the [military]. So I thought, ‘I like working with older kids,’ so I decided to teach math at the secondary level.” Student teaching in a DMPS high school was wonderful. “I enjoyed the hell out of that. That was it

for me. That's why I chose to continue. I thought, 'This is great. These kids are sharp. They like to learn.' They actually showed me respect." He was quickly hired at the secondary level and believed that teaching would become his lifelong career, "maybe until I retire." He was "interested in a home where I go to work. I'm not one of those job hoppers."

Four more participants had turned to teaching after other careers. Finding her job as a medical secretary unfulfilling, Sharon worked her way through college to earn EIEd and SpEd degrees. During high school, she helped in a second grade classroom and found she had "enjoyed working with kids." She decided on special education because she had "had a neighbor with Down Syndrome, and I seemed to work well with him, and I think I'm empathetic and patient." She enjoyed student teaching and looked forward to her new life. She was a single mother and chose Des Moines for her daughter's educational opportunities and the teaching opportunities for herself. Connor held a BS degree and a position in state government when he volunteered in a program serving young people. He remembered his admiration for the quality of life his grandparents had had as teachers. "That certainly had an impact on my decision to go into teaching." He acquired a secondary teaching certificate through a two

year Master's program, attending classes weekends and evenings. He was a success at student teaching and worked as a DMPS associate before getting a contract at a high school. Greg dropped out of college and worked in a variety of jobs including food service for the DMPS. He began volunteering as a tutor. He commented, "I found that I had a knack for teaching and that I just had a way with kids." Through a private, small college program, he finished his degree in EIEd with a SpEd endorsement. Although one of his student teaching assignments was difficult, his second assignment was encouraging, and he looked forward to teaching. He took a position for which he felt apprehensive because it was similar to his difficult first student teaching experience, but he was relying on his knowledge and degrees. Robert was my oldest participant. He had become a teacher in the 1970s and taught for two years. He then entered the business world until the 1990s when his company downsized, eliminating his position. While he worked various jobs, he, too, began volunteering with young people, particularly "needy kids....It motivated me to get back into teaching because I saw a need for a lot of the kids who didn't actually get some of the things that they should have been getting as far as instruction, and I also wanted to consider myself as a role model for some of those kids because I knew I could

do that, too.” He took the necessary classes to reinstate his teaching license and was hired by the DMPS. He accepted knowing the position was at the middle-school level and not in his certified area with the understanding he would be in line for a position in his field.

As the interviewing portion of the research was ending, I met with two young women who had graduated from high school in the early 1990s, attended college to become teachers, and began teaching in the DMPS. I listened to their stories, and I was both renewed as I saw that such intelligent, caring young people were entering teaching but disheartened because I knew we were losing them. Karen had worked with kids in a camp for children with disabilities. She decided, “You know when something fits, you can tell that’s your gift.” She went through a five year program for teaching students with special disabilities. Anna’s perspective was not quite as idealistic as some of my other participants’ including Karen’s. “I didn’t think I wanted to be a teacher because of my mom...she came home grumpy from school everyday,...and I know how much she would scramble around for money to make ends meet.” During the years at a small, private Iowa college, a foreign language teacher “turned me on to teaching.” Anna loved the idea of having “the chance to open other peoples’ eyes and hearts to worlds

outside of our own here in the US.” She earned her teaching degree, but thought that after a few years teaching, she might “kind of see what else is out there.”

Both young women had been happy with their student teaching and optimistic about choosing teaching and becoming teachers.

Summary

As a group of twenty participants, the facts of their decision making and the paths they followed revealed both noteworthy similarities and noteworthy differences. I found that six participants had chosen teaching early in their lives. Five had decided to become teachers during their college years although for two of them, teaching could be described as a fall back choice. Nine participants turned to teaching after other careers. Eleven were influenced by family members in education. Ten participants received their teacher education through the three state universities in Iowa while eight former teachers attended small private Iowa colleges. Two participants had earned Masters Degrees, one through a five-year program and another during her teaching years. Two participants had earned endorsements in special education as a condition of their teaching positions. Two graduated from teacher preparation programs in other states’ universities. Seventeen participants told of successful student teaching

experiences. However, three went on to become teachers in spite of some negative experiences during their student teaching assignments. Seven of these twenty former teachers spent time, and in some cases several years, doing substitute teaching or becoming associates while waiting for a full time position. Seventeen participants had planned on long term teaching careers while three considered the possibility of other careers after a few years of teaching.

I introduced these participants in detail because it is through their stories of choosing teaching and becoming teachers that they revealed not only the facts of their decision making and the paths they followed, but also the beliefs, attitudes, and the expectations they held about becoming teachers and teaching. Clearly, they revealed idealism, enthusiasm, altruism, and a confidence in their abilities to influence children and young people.

Leaving Teaching

"If the track is tough and the hill is rough,

Just thinking you can just ain't enough."

(Silverstein, 1974, p. 158)

"Going the Distance." I was thinking about my participants as I drove past the sign high on the corner of the old, red brick stadium. A runner in silhouette

was poised underneath. “92nd Annual” and “American Classic” were the rest of the highlighted, important words advertising the Drake Relays. The Relays is an international meet that takes place, rain or shine, the last weekend of April. It is an exciting time in Des Moines. Elementary, middle school, and high school track and field stars are given the opportunity to compete in the same arena as professional athletes. Community people join the Drake athletic administrators and coaches to supervise and conduct the competitions. Thousands of people from all over the world fill the stadium to witness the feats of the athletes. I parked, found an open gate, and climbed into the empty bleachers. This day was a quiet, golden autumn day. The blue sky matched the bright Drake Blue of the track; the forest-green grass infield contrasted in tone. My memory brought to life the cheering fans as the athletes met their challenges, broke records, and won events.

A favorite and one of the most exciting races is the 3000 meter Steeplechase. It requires almost eight full laps around the 400 meter track. The rules state that the first one half lap must be free of obstacles. Then, the runners must jump the wide, 250 pound hurdle which is stationed in front of 12 feet of water. Runners develop various strategies for the race. The first strategy is to

jump with both feet on top of the wide first hurdle and lunge forward as far as possible over the water, so that only one foot gets wet. Runners then face four more movable hurdles during the rest of the first lap. The Steeplechase differs from other races since competitors are not aligned with the eight lanes of the track. In fact, at the Drake Relays twenty-four runners begin together. They start off through the first hurdle and water obstacle in close competition, but soon begin to spread out. They each follow their own strategy for pacing and jumping the remaining twenty-four movable hurdles, the six hurdle/water jump combinations, and navigating among the other competitors hindered by the drag of one or both wet shoes. As fatigue sets in, runners have commented that the hurdles look higher and higher and their wet shoes become heavier and heavier. I have often thought of the Steeplechase as a race that mimics both life and teaching: Learning and practicing, planning and strategizing can only take you so far; the unknown obstacles are challenging, sometimes defeating; and fatigue makes things seem even worse than they are.

As I looked out across the track, I began to visualize my participants, these former teachers, as Steeplechase athletes. I saw them milling about as track athletes do, stretching and warming up for their events. Each one was

qualified and awarded a position for the race. Each one was waiting and planning in anticipation of the starting gunshot, the first day of the school year, the first day in his/her own classroom with his/her own students. Each one had been judged competent and prepared to "go the distance" in his/her teaching careers, prepared to meet the challenges of the hurdles they would face. In my mind I saw them beginning with exhilaration and hope, overcoming the obstacles of those first laps, those first months and years. As I continued to watch though, I began to see them leaving the track, giving up their places, giving up their careers, disappearing one by one from the stadium. I knew why they were leaving. I knew their experiences; I knew their stories. Some left early while still in the competition; others left only after falling behind from frustration and fatigue. Sadly, there was little sound of appreciation for the laps they had run, the time they had given, the students they had taught. Few encouraged them to keep on. Few cheered.

Since that day, I have thought about the value society places on the ability to endure. Early in life we learn the importance of "going the distance." Our language is filled with variations on this theme: "hang in there," "if at first you don't succeed, try and try again;" "never give up." It is difficult to quit in our

society. Leaving, quitting, “throwing in the towel,” carry heavy loads of negative connotations. Those who quit are questioned suspiciously, often with words subtly implying failure. It is particularly difficult to quit a profession, a career when one has worked long and hard to attain it. When I listened to the stories of the participants, they often talked of the struggles they had in making their decisions to leave teaching. None of the participants had single, easy answers as reasons for their leaving. Their explanations were complicated, individual stories of their teaching experiences and life-changing events. Yet, all of these former teachers told of the serious difficulties they had had during their teaching careers. These experiences began with disillusionment and created frustration, stress, and fatigue. For some participants, the low salary also played a part in these feelings. Of the twenty participants, eight of these former teachers chose to leave because of the negative effects of their teaching careers on themselves and their families. Further, these negative effects also influenced eleven other participants to give up their careers as teachers when family needs and new opportunities presented themselves. Although one participant left the profession because of a very special opportunity in a related field, he, too, talked of the stress of teaching, “I think that teaching is the toughest job there is, physically, emotionally and

mentally...the challenges every single day.”

Mounting hurdles: mounting disillusionment

“We think we can all change the world.” Sharon

If living and teaching are like competing in the Steeplechase, all of the twenty participants remembered the excitement they had felt at the beginning of the race, the initial hurdles of their teaching days. They remembered their expectations, their ideals, their hopes. For example, even though Todd substituted five years before he took a position in a special education program, he remembered, “I thought everybody was going to respect their teachers like I did....If my teacher told me to do something, I’d do it, and I always did my homework....The role model of the teacher was somebody that had something to offer you.” However, participants also remembered how those idealized hurdles slowly became disappointments, one after another. Issues of classroom management, particularly the intertwining challenges of motivation and discipline, were first-lap-hurdles blocking their desire *to teach*.

“I just thought more of my effort would be on the quality of my instruction rather than how to keep this child on task.” Sally

When Connor began teaching at the high school level, he remembered, “I

don't think you are ever quite prepared for the classroom management; challenges are pretty great, and in my first year I had six classes a day, and I had about 125 students a day and three subjects...and that took me awhile to even know what classroom management is....It's trial by fire." Richard had similar experiences at the high school level. He found that "the biggest problem was the discipline...just keeping order in the classroom and getting kids to listen and getting kids to do their homework and getting kids to be even moderately interested in what's going on." He gave an example of one of his experiences.

I couldn't even get kids interested in learning how to balance their checkbook. So, if I wasn't able to do that,...that's about as real as it gets. And I couldn't get that across...and I don't know if I was just so frustrated that I couldn't rise to the occasion or if [teaching] just wasn't for me.

Patty, another high school teacher, prefaced her experiences with memories of her expectations, "I guess I was idealistic. I guess I always hoped to come in and the kids are excited to learn, and they're happy you're there. Especially when you're young. You want [students] to like you." She gave an example of an especially disappointing day.

One time I had this really neat lesson. I was reading this story and trying

to get their personal experiences into it and telling them what I thought...and one of the students, just right in the middle, sighed and said, "Are you going to go on with another one of your stories because they are really boring,...and I'm just going to go to sleep."

Patty's disappointment was evident as she perceived the difficulty of motivating students:

When you really get in the classroom, it really is amazing sometimes how hard it is to motivate them...you try so hard to come up with this lesson...and you can't get them to do the work or...to keep them listening and in line, plus trying to teach them something.

Ron taught at the middle school level. He described the disillusioning hurdles of his teaching days:

I would start out with this great lesson plan thinking, "It's going to be awesome." And they would totally not get into it. So, I would end up giving them book work to do (which meant that every night I had one hundred and some pages to correct)...and then supervise....I wasn't really teaching them....It was kind of a disappointment.

Robert was disillusioned by the attitude of middle school students: "In

middle schools it [is] like ‘Why do I have to do this? I don’t want to do this. You can’t make me do this.’—those types of things” he found discouraging. Linda also was disillusioned teaching in an elementary level, self-contained special education program. She described her feeling that she “was able to handle [my students] and take care of the problems,” but she felt as though she wasn’t “getting any teaching done.” She analyzed her “frustration” as she compared reality with her earlier vision. “I’m not teaching!...A teacher is what I wanted to be...and I wanted to do it forever.” Karen, an elementary educator in a program for students with special needs, best summarized the early disillusionment of these former teachers when she said, “What I thought teaching would be and what teaching had become because of the environment are two totally different things.” Nevertheless, these seven teacher-Steeplechasers kept on the track for several more laps.

“It’s very frustrating to try to equal things out.... There is a big difference between some students.... The high crisis kids get the most attention.” Dorothy

At the Drake Relays, hundreds of people work hundreds of hours to ensure that all the events including the Steeplechase are conducted fairly for all of the athletes. Unfortunately, this type of fair and equal treatment is not always

present in the classroom, and it adds to teachers' disillusionment. Several participants told stories about their problems with students whom they perceived took more than their share of time and attention. Dorothy was one of the participants who articulated her feelings on these inequalities. She had substituted for a year before she landed a special education elementary resource position. She described one of her experiences, "We had...one student (who) got special treatment...and that just made me sick because...this kid gets all this teacher's time and look at all these other kids!" Her voice raised with her memory of her intense exasperation. She shook her head as she expressed her belief. "Sometimes I think that hurts the teacher when she sees all that. It hurts her professionally because she's sitting there going, 'Man, I can't help all of them! And you do want to. You do.'" Janet had similar experiences and feelings. She also had substituted before acquiring a place as a regular elementary education teacher. She spoke of one student who "really took the majority of my time. That was the year I felt like, 'Man, I am not teaching these other kids what they need to learn. I take away so much teaching time for that one kid.'" Her frustration was felt as she continued: "And that's what made me the maddest, I think, or the most upset, that I couldn't do my job of teaching." Her concern was that she was not

providing the education expected for all of her third graders. For these teachers, the hurdles were mounting.

“The emotional challenges just wore me out. I just got too involved and too wrapped up in the kids. That just got to me...I couldn’t do it day in and day out. It was just too emotionally burning.” Todd

Many of my participants talked not only about their struggles with classroom management and the inequality in the classroom, but also about their inability to help meet the basic needs of many of their students, particularly those whom they perceived were abused or neglected. Karen’s voice held regret as she spoke: “I think this in the end was the worst part for me...for some reason kids with disabilities tend to have higher incidents of abuse. People are more likely to take advantage of them.” She wondered whether the system was doing all it could. Her emotions were strong as she remembered her feelings and pain. “I would have to worry that these kids were going to be alive the next day....I couldn’t just leave my work at work.” She was heartbroken as she realized, “it just wasn’t emotionally healthy for me to deal with that all the time....I couldn’t just forget about it.” Anna, the youngest of my participants, acquired a high school position upon college graduation and became a confidant of some of her

students. She said, "It did affect my stress level as far as dealing with more behavior issues...what I remember more is [my strong] emotions...of going home after talking with a student who has been cutting herself...but the parents don't have a clue." Linda was teaching in a self-contained special education classroom with a number of severely behaviorally disordered (3.6 BD) students. She said, "I brought my job home with me every single night. It wasn't the teaching...it was... the kids themselves, and I wanted to bring half of them home to live with me." She worked so closely with her students and knew "what they were going through." As her job became more and more stressful, "my husband felt like there was nothing left for him...it was all consuming. It was just too much."

The frustration and pain of so many of my participants were summed up in Sharon's impassioned questions.

How do you shut off your emotions? How do you shield yourself at school when you have kids that are being abused or whatever? Kids that have a mom that doesn't want to see them, or kids who have parents in jail, because there are a lot more than I would ever thought that have parents incarcerated?

Her voice broke with resignation.

I'm a fairly empathetic person, I think...I couldn't teach kids because their needs were not being met at home. If they are worried about where they are going to sleep or what they are going to wear, if someone is going to give them a hug, how can they learn their alphabet?

If teaching is like running in the Steeplechase, these teachers were being hampered by the hurdles they encountered and failed to overcome. Problems in motivating and disciplining students, in finding time for each of their students, and in dealing with their own feelings of empathy for their students were mounting hurdles of disillusionment with their teaching careers.

Not many fans in the stands: not many cheers nor much support

At the Drake Relays, the stands are filled, and fans rise and cheer as the Steeplechasers run past. In the infield, coaches and colleagues prod them on with encouraging words. Energy swells, and the runners gain strength to press on for another lap, another round of hurdles. But just as there were differences in equity issues in the classroom, there were differences between teachers and Steeplechasers in their levels of support. Moreover, as participants discussed their perceptions and experiences related to support, it became evident that the term *support* was used with conflicting meanings. For example, some people

talked of great support and encouragement. Even though there were no stands of cheering fans inspiring bursts of energy and enthusiasm, the large majority of my participants did feel what could best be understood as *personal support* and friendship from other teachers and their principals. Linda talked about her colleague and friend. "Teacherwise, I had great support....She was my mentor, and she was absolutely wonderful....I could never have [taught] without her." Judy had similar praise for her building administrator. "At [my middle school] I feel I had really good support. I really enjoyed the principal there. He is really nice." Another example came from Janet. During the six years she taught, she had several principals and found them all helpful. She mentioned each one with glowing adjectives: "wonderful, really, really, supportive...there for you...whatever you needed." With few exceptions, my participants were satisfied with the level of *personal support* and friendship they received within their buildings from both colleagues and administrators. In contrast, the term *support* was also discussed with a negative denotation when it was used as *professional support*. Most of these participants did not feel professionally supported by the school district. They also felt little professional support from parents and the families of their students.

"I think the main frustrations were lack of support, lack of resources." Karen

Hurdles in the teachers' Steeplechase came in many forms. Although, as indicated, many of these former teachers felt personally supported, they were not always professionally supported in relation to the needs required in the day to day work of teaching. For example, adequate space and materials to help them achieve success with students were not always provided. As with many new teachers, Patty had to *travel*, to teach in several different rooms that belonged to other teachers.

I never had my own room, I've always been in at least three or four different rooms...up and down. When I was pregnant, I was on three different floors, which was really hard, especially when I started bleeding late in the pregnancy—that was hard....When you have to carry a lot of things. [There were no elevators in her building.] Then you get to the room, and you think, "I forgot that thing and I've got to have it." So you run back, and you get it, and then, of course, class has started and the kids are there.

There were other problems in sharing rooms for Patty. In one case, "I felt so intimidated....Every little knit-picky thing. Like if a student left a pencil on the

table, I heard about it the next day.” The veteran teacher, whose room she used a few hours a day, was critical of her. “I wasn’t allowed to take over my own classroom. I would be told what I was doing was wrong,” so she felt she couldn’t do anything right.

Linda did have her own classroom, but it was in a basement, and it was less than ideal.

There were cockroaches and mold and mice and bugs crawling out of the walls....The kids ate lunch in the classroom, so they would eat at their desks. Lunches were delivered to us....They each had their own Styrofoam container for lunch. It always smelled, and there was always food on the floor, and that was probably why there were always cockroaches....You would open your file drawer to pull out your math folder, and a big bug would jump out at you, and it was just disgusting.

Having a classroom in the basement posed other problems. Linda went on to describe with disgust a toilet overflowing and water coming down into her room on her bookshelves. But she continued with a sense of futile optimism: “We had a bathroom real close, and the teachers shared it with the little girls. We didn’t have our own bathroom or anything. But that was okay. Having it close to your

classroom was really nice.” Linda ended her description without sarcasm, despite the difficulty she faced in trying to teach students in that environment.

For Karen, instead of encouragement from two of her supervisors, she found they often were at odds with each other. “One would tell you to do one thing, and the other would tell you to do another thing, and no matter what you did you lost, because you couldn’t make them both happy.” She felt as though she were “trying to do [my] job, but not exactly sure what [I was] supposed to do.”

Another participant, Sharon, told of lack of support from her supervisor: “If it came down to me or a parent, he was going to be backing the parent and not myself. That happened last year.” Sharon then told the story of being “investigated for child abuse, which is very traumatic.” Sharon had argued with a special education student in the school hallway, and the student later “claimed that I grabbed him by the arm and drug him around like a dog.” A very upset mother, who had previously caused difficulties for staff and administration, had then demanded that the situation be investigated. Sharon said, “I just felt like I was on trial.” Two central administrators “came up to the school and this took half of my day away from teaching, and it also left my associate who was not certified in my room to teach my kids, which was another criticism I had” because it was

against the law to leave students in the care of someone without a teaching license, and yet they did. Later, her supervisor came to her room and told her “a report has been filed and someone will come and investigate you.” No one suggested that she have someone to be a witness or support her through this ordeal. Sharon explained that the next day an investigator talked to her and the accusation was unfounded, “but I was very panicked....I didn’t know if [the investigator] was part of the district or part of the department of human services.” As she held up her hand, “I have a file about that thick...I think the report was written in my favor....Still, it is in my file, and it was traumatic.” When she expressed her concern to her supervisor about this report going into her employment record, he said, “Well, everyone knows that [the boy’s mother] is suit happy. All they have to see is the name attached, and they know it’s nothing.” His words did not allay her fears since the information would be a part of her educational file throughout her career, long after her beginning teaching days where this family was known. The lack of professional support became a disappointing hurdle, hindering them as they continued on their laps.

Nevertheless, Patty, Linda, Karen, and Sharon were able to persevere and continue in the teachers’ Steeplechase.

For Robert, however, the lack of professional support was instrumental in his decision to leave teaching. He had taken a position outside his major field with the understanding that he would soon be given a placement in his area. He recalled his frustration with the administration's lack of concern for his situation: "For three years they had promised me a school to be at, and it never happened....They said, 'Hey, just stay here. Next year is going to be different.'" Robert talked about his experiences in the years during his "wait." He worked in two schools, the first year driving across town on his planning period. He also talked about his disappointment over the lack of relationships with his colleagues as a half-time teacher in two buildings. "They hardly got to know me....You're not complete; you're not part of the team." Robert's frustration and stress finally convinced him to quit waiting, and he left for another job during his third year of teaching. No fans cheered him for his effort.

"I loved the kids... but it was the lack of support from the parents that was really trying." Jim

Some of the most difficult aspects of teaching for my participants came from the lack of supportive relationships with the families of their students. Todd knew that "what I did in the eight hours with the kids at school was wiped away in

ten minutes when they go home. That was very frustrating because a lot of parents did a lot of lip service and that was it." Dorothy also talked about her inability to build relationships with the families of her students. "You really can't. No matter how much you call them, write them, leave them alone." Some parents requested to be left alone. When she did hear from parents, oftentimes she heard, "I don't like school. I got Fs. I hate school because I had a bad experience with school. I just want my kid to go to school and get out. And that's all I want with you." Janet had even felt fear when an angry father came into her room unexpectedly one morning. Some "parents were not supportive....I remember one parent came in and yelled at me, yelled at me! He was a big man, too. And, oh, thank goodness it was [an open spaces classroom] because some of the other teachers...came around to make sure I was okay...he just yelled at me like I'd never been yelled at before."

The lack of professional support both on the part of administration and parents added to the disillusionment for some participants and became a strong incentive to leave teaching for others. Fans in the stands? Cheers of support? These teachers did not see or hear them.

The immovable hurdle: VIOLENCE

"I noticed from the beginning [from] when I started to when I left, things had gotten a lot more violent." Jim

Many students have such difficult lives outside of school that they sometimes explode violently in the classroom. Teachers experiencing disillusionment who then face violence are much like Steeplechasers jumping the combination of the wide immovable hurdle along with the accompanying gully of water. Both teachers and runners confront serious obstacles in their paths. The participants often spoke graphically of the day to day confrontations with violent students. Todd described the violent outbreaks in his middle school special education classroom: "I've been assaulted; I've had kids try to punch me, hit me, kick me, bite me, scratch me." One particular example was the only time he wore a tie: "A kid got hold of it, trying to strangle me, and I thought, 'I'm not going to wear a tie any more.'" He continued to talk of numerous times when he was confronted by "something of a physical nature....That was part of the territory."

Several teachers mentioned their need to wear particular kinds of clothing and shoes related to the negative behaviors of some of their students. Dorothy, in elementary special education, talked wearily as she remembered the violence.

"I had to restrain a lot of kids. That got to wear down on me." She described some of her behaviorally disordered students. "They're from compliant little boy...or a little girl, and then they're kicking and screaming and throwing desks and throwing pencils, trying to stab you, trying to spit at you." When some of her students would "snap...down the hall...they were gone," she decided that she "couldn't wear dresses anymore because I had to wear slacks...and gym shoes" to run after them.

Sharon, another elementary special education teacher described her experiences. She had asked for help from her administrator in dealing with one of her students, but the problem was not solved. "This child was so disruptive no one could learn. Even the room across the hall." Almost daily, she would ask to have him removed from the room. She sighed, "He would yell, 'Get your f---'en hands off me, you ugly b----' to the principal as she was carrying him out of the room." Sharon also had another student who "would kick at his desk and throw temper tantrums." She explained her feelings this way: "I felt like I was beating my head against the wall. I don't feel like my kids made [enough] growth last year, which was sad and disheartening because I know how much extra time I put in....I just never felt like I accomplished anything."

If teaching is like running in the Steeplechase, for four more of the women participants, the immovable hurdles of disillusionment combined with the violence they experienced in their positions caused them to leave the race, to leave their teaching careers. The first woman was Judy, a teacher for two years in a rural Iowa school before her two years at a Des Moines middle school. The verbal assaults she experienced in DMPS took their toll: "One girl called me a bitch many, many, many times. Many times. They would say that I was the "F---ing bitch, and all that kind of stuff. Normally they wouldn't tell you right to your face, but they said it loud enough so you could hear." She felt she could send students to the office, but she remembered that she "didn't actually ever get used to being called names or being cussed at." When she became pregnant, she decided to leave. She described her last day as one of her worst ever: "I just thought, 'There's no way I'm going to come back into this mess.' That morning someone had cussed at me and called me something in the hallway...and by the end of the day, I had three other people calling me names and cussing at me!" She talked about enjoying the teaching part, but she concluded: "Every time I think about being a teacher, I think, 'Oh, yeah. Running after that kid down the hallway. I really want to do THAT again!'"

The three other women became pregnant during the school year, and they told of the fears of violence against their unborn babies. Those fears caused them to leave their classrooms and careers. Janet and Barbara, both regular education elementary teachers, had students with behavior problems and had been hit several times. Janet remembered, “I had a [third grade] group of kids, Oh, Man! There were certain kids in that class that just were really naughty, really naughty—stealing and cheating and lying and hitting, and...that boy hit me! I don’t know how many times...and I thought, ‘This cannot be happening!’” Barbara’s experience with her lower elementary regular education class was similar. She described a student with a severe behavior problem. “I was pregnant, and he was abusive and aggressive.”

Linda also described her violent situations with behavior disordered students. She guessed that “at least once a week...I would have some type of kick or hit.” She had resigned herself to working with this type of “extreme” nature of behavior disordered students. When her students acted violently, “pushing over desks or chairs,” she would try to stop them from destroying the classroom and risk getting hurt. She remembered being so stressed that she “would come home...cry...and my husband threatened to divorce me if I didn’t

leave [teaching]." But, she declared that she was stubborn and "was not going to be defeated." However, when she became pregnant, she "decided I didn't want to get a kick in the stomach or a scissors in the stomach." She finally accepted defeat. "It wasn't worth it anymore." Neither Judy nor Linda returned to their teaching careers after their babies were born. Janet and Barbara returned to teaching for a short time.

The level of violence was also a factor in Jim's decision to leave teaching. Jim was on his fourth lap, fourth year teaching at the middle school level, both feet wet, and fatigue setting in when he realized "there was a lot more violence coming into the school." Teachers have a variety of duties outside the classroom, and Jim talked of one morning when he was on duty outside the school. "We had a drive-by [shooting]....[The shooter] was one of our former students....He was shooting at some of our current students." No students were injured, though bullets were found embedded in a nearby building. He remembered "everybody diving for cover." Jim, a tall, strong young man, had been called to help in another violent situation. "We had the knifing incident." A young man was slashing tires in the teachers' parking lot. Jim had been asked to go out with two other staff members to apprehend the young man. "We got this kid chased down,

and he tried to get the [vice-principal] with a knife....We held him there until the police arrived.”

One of the final straws for Jim happened when he was chaperoning an evening event. “The biggest problem I had in my four years there was not with students but with parents.” Two people, a parent of one student and a grandmother of another, began fighting during a music concert. He asked them “both to leave” because they were causing a disturbance. “The grandmother started accusing me of being a racist. Later, she went to the principal and the school board members making accusations. [Central Administration] hauled me in to find out what was going on. Basically it was my word against hers.”

Eventually, the administration talked with the granddaughter, and Jim was exonerated. Nevertheless, “It was a bad situation. That’s the kind of stuff that really turned me off.” Similar to Linda, Jim’s spouse impacted his decision to leave teaching. After he told stories of his developing disillusionment with teaching and his experiences related to violence, he went on to say,

I think the thing that convinced me a lot, too, was my wife was very nervous about me being [at school]. It got to her. She was at the music concert when the parent and the grandparent went at it...and she just

decided...I couldn't take [our] kids [to school]....She did not want me there. She was scared to death.

After facing these hurdles, Jim “didn’t have much of a problem” in deciding to leave the teachers’ Steeplechase. He was offered a job outside the school district in technology because of knowledge and skills he had developed during his teaching years. Although salary was not originally an issue in his decision to leave, Jim mentioned that his level of salary was about \$25,000.00 a year higher than he would have earned had he remained a teacher.

Ribbons and trophies: teacher salaries

“Qualified individuals leave teaching because of benefits elsewhere.” Jeff

If teachers are like runners in the Steeplechase, when it comes to compensation, they are closer to amateur rather than professional level. For several of the participants, the low salary added to the burden of the other difficulties they faced as teachers. Although Allen and Anna did not leave teaching solely because of the salary, it did play a part in the daily struggles they faced, particularly since they were young, single, and “paying...student loans [and] paying on my car,” as Allen commented. He added, “It was frustrating to be working that hard, and [yet] there were times when I would count in pennies to go

buy food....I didn't feel like I was living any sort of extravagant life." Both Allen and Anna took part-time jobs to supplement their teaching incomes. Anna said it was "so I could pay my bills." Salary was not the deciding factor in leaving teaching for them, but Anna commented that salary would have been an issue in thinking "about staying in Des Moines" given the comparatively lower salary with other parts of the nation.

The low salary, however, was the primary reason other participants made the decision to leave their classrooms. Ron was only a few years older than Allen and Anna, and he also was single when he started teaching. He really "hadn't thought about...the economics of [teaching]....I was single at the time, and you can survive on a teacher's salary." When he contemplated marriage, he wondered about the career a future wife might have "praying, hopefully, she wouldn't be a teacher, too." He knew it would be difficult to make a living and support kids. Salary was becoming a concern. When Ron married, his wife, a young physician, took an internship in a large city in a neighboring state. He realized that a teaching salary "by itself was definitely never going to do it." He also knew that if he took a second job, he would have less time with his wife. Further, he was worried about his ability to deal with discipline and motivation

with students in an even larger city school district since he had become disillusioned by the difficulty with discipline and motivation with Des Moines students. Before moving, he “actually looked into the possibility of continuing teaching,” but when he found he would need more courses to become certified in that state, he decided, “O.K. I’m not going to teach.” Disillusionment and salary combined to add to his decision. Ron was quickly hired by a financial firm, and he willingly left the educational track.

Salary was also the primary reason Jeff left teaching although his early disillusionment and frustration played a part in his decision. He had chosen teaching as a second career, spending two extra years going back to college to earn his certificate. Jeff immediately landed a teaching position in his field at the middle school level, and he was just running the first lap when he was approached with an offer he couldn’t refuse. He had begun the fall semester with enthusiasm—although he found the level of his middle school students more difficult to manage than the high school students with whom he had worked during his student teaching. “My level of frustration was very high. There were days that I just didn’t want to go to school.” This frustration “was on my mind, and it had me up at night.” When an employer outside education offered him a job

earning considerably more money, he was surprised. "I wasn't looking for a job. It came to me." His decision to leave teaching was simply "the money." Making the decision was not without regret; he "went over...the numbers in my head, and thought, 'What they are offering me to start, I'm not going to make in teaching in ten years.' No matter how much I love teaching, I just couldn't pass that up." He went on to explain that "my family is my first priority," and that he could not deny them the monetary advantages they would have from the salary and the opportunities for advancement he was being offered. The profession lost Jeff after four months of teaching.

The relationship between salary and the needs of families were critical issues for several other participants as they weighed their decisions to stay or leave teaching careers. Terrance endured on the teaching track for seven laps—seven years. Nearing the end, he was overcome by fatigue from holding down three jobs in order to meet the monetary needs of his growing family. "As far as why I left teaching, money was the first issue." He was working part-time jobs, sometimes up to three and four extra jobs "at one time." At one point, one of his part-time jobs was "a paper route from 2:30 to 4:30 in the morning." He told of his day: "I would come home and get about two hours worth of sleep, then...go to

school. That took a toll on me.” When he began seeing a difference in his teaching and relationships with students, he knew he had to change. He talked in a soft caring voice, “It’s not that I gave up teaching. I enjoyed it...I hated to leave.” It took Terrance two years to decide to give up. “I was just too tired. I was tired of being tired. I was tired of not seeing my family.” When he left teaching, his starting salary at his new job was commensurate with the salary level of a teacher with his degree and twenty-five years of experience. “I didn’t fail at teaching....I have a family that I have to provide for and that’s first and foremost.”

Going the distance in the teachers’ Steeplechase was neither to his financial benefit nor to the benefit of himself and his family.

Higher hurdles: teacher overload

“In the beginning, I thought it would be an easy ‘family’ job....I just didn’t understand the impact my own children would have....It’s such a demanding job that it wouldn’t have been fair to my family if I stayed.” Barbara

Steeplechasers count off the hurdles and laps; teachers count off the days—and then the nights. The disillusionment and stress along with their workload influenced four of the women participants with young children to leave their careers: Patty, Sally, Barbara, and Janet. All four women and their

husbands were concerned about the effects of their jobs as teachers on their home lives. Patty recalled, "The hardest thing for me with teaching was dealing with extreme [emotional] highs and lows." There were days when "everything worked. The kids listened. They learned. They were on task." Days like this would give her "the greatest feeling in the world. It was so rewarding!" She found other days could "just be opposite." On those days she would feel "I'm the worst teacher in the world. I should never be doing this." She talked of becoming frustrated and threatening that this would be her "last year of teaching!" Sally spoke philosophically about stress and society: "I just look at families today [who] are under a lot of stress....Home is kind of like the stopping ground on the way to somewhere else, and...I just don't want [ours] to be a stressful family."

Along with their level of stress from their teaching days, the after hours they committed to being good teachers played significant roles in their decisions to leave teaching. Barbara, an elementary teacher, told of her normal days before her baby was born: "It took from 6:00 [am] until 6:00 or 7:00 [pm] to keep up and feel like I was doing a good job....You don't get anything done when you're teaching." Sally agreed. "Sometimes, I just had a half an hour [for planning] if the kids had library, and that was it [for] THE WHOLE DAY! I never

felt like I had adequate time within what they called a day.” She took home papers, books to read, and “staff development type things...there was always extra stuff to do.” Before Sally had her son, she could work until 6:00 [pm] which she often did. Remembering her situation, she said, “I think the most frustrating thing for me was never feeling like I could give the students enough of my feedback...over their work. That was always hard.” When she had her son, she found that she “just couldn’t do justice to either one.”

Likewise, Janet described her first months after her child was born. “I really worked hard during my planning time....At home, I devoted my time to Jake, and then dinner, and then when he went to bed, I was up checking the papers....I didn’t ever want to take time away from him.” Janet laughed as she recalled always bringing “home papers...baskets full of papers.” In spite of the disillusionment, the workload, and the stress, these women struggled with their decisions to leave their careers. Patty commented, “I never ever thought I would be a stay-at-home mom. Never. I always thought, ‘I’ve got to work.’” However, after having her baby, taking her to daycare, and thinking about her all day long, she changed her mind. Sally had similar feelings. “Before I had him, I just thought, ‘I’ll just have him in daycare.’ I didn’t even think about it. And then I had

him...and I just didn't want to leave him." Sally had a particularly hard time deciding to stay home since she had recently earned her Masters Degree and she also had always planned to work. As she said, "I just felt like [teaching] was something I really liked to do." Janet also "thought a long time about it." She was scared to resign after working so hard and subbing for two years to get a contract. She expressed her feelings: "It's like really cutting all the ties."

Listening to the stories of the decision making processes of these women and their families, it became apparent that the impact of a teaching salary could be paradoxical. For the men participants' experiences described earlier, the salary was not enough to provide for their families. Here, for these women, salary was so insignificant that they could manage without it. In thinking about salary as an issue in leaving, Barbara said, "that wasn't anything." Further, with the cost of child care and the added stress on their families, they felt it did not pay for them to work. Sally and Janet had used daycare for their first children before others came along. Sally remembered, "Half of my salary went to pay his babysitter... it wasn't enough for me to put up with the hassle of getting him to daycare...running here...and there...making our lives stressful and missing out on what he was doing." On the other hand, Janet and her husband had seriously

considered the impact of losing her salary, but with three children, they found “to pay for a babysitter, it would not pay...to work.” They calculated child care “would be about \$300.00 per week.” Janet was taking home about \$320.00, leaving about \$20.00 for gas. She decided, “No way. My kids are way more important.” She had always known she would not be the bread winner, but with three children, “I can’t afford to...teach!” Janet also felt, “I want to raise them. I don’t want a babysitter raising them. I want to instill my values, my morals.”

After thoughtful deliberation over the difficulties they had experienced as teachers and the workload they felt teaching required, Janet, Sally, Patty, and Barbara decided that their family life and their own children were more important than their careers. These former teacher-Steeplechasers had jumped high and run well, but with the stress, workload, and demands on their time they decided that “*going the distance*” with their families was more important than finishing the race.

Drag: teacher “burnout”

“And by the end...I had nothing left to give....I couldn’t do it anymore....I felt like I was going to war every day...prepare for battle...put on your armor.” Karen

If teachers are like runners in the Steeplechase, seven participants

decided that the hurdles were too high, the laps too many, and the drag from wet shoes too heavy, and they left the race. Karen's words echoed with pain and exhaustion. As I had in all my interviews, after hearing their stories of choosing a teaching career and becoming teachers, I simply asked, "What made you decide to leave teaching?" When I listened closely, the word I heard most often by these seven participants was *frustration*, and in their voices, I heard *fatigue*.

I could feel the depth of Richard's feelings as he spoke, "just that frustration....I'm not a quitter....I spent all of that time taking those classes. I got this teacher's certificate. I worked hard to get this job in the school I wanted." He had expected that teaching in Des Moines would be his life-long career. "I wasn't just going to throw it away." For two years he tried to work with students, but he felt he was not doing a good job. "I was working insanely...10 or 12 hours or even more a day." He felt that teaching was "a calling," and he came to believe he did not "quite have that talent that some...teachers did." He believed that they "had to have had that talent to begin with." His disillusionment, frustration, and fatigue overcame his desire to teach. "I wanted to be honorable and fulfill my commitment....I waited until the end of the school year...but I just had to leave.... You've got to have a life." After spending those four and a half years in college to

become a teacher following his success in the military, Richard left the classroom. "Maybe it's just that I'm too much of a perfectionist or that I'm too impatient." He was immediately hired in the business community.

Allen's experiences and feelings were similar: "One of the problems was that I took it so personally when it didn't go well." He would spend "hours and hours and hours" working to create an inspiring and "interesting" lesson. As often happens, students were not inspired or interested, and he would become "really distraught." Allen ran hard, bounding over hurdles, sloshing through that water for three laps—three years—before he gasped and stumbled off the track.

Disillusionment and frustration prevented Richard and Allen from reaching their goal of becoming successful teachers. When this desire to teach was thwarted by students who for one reason or another were unable to participate in the teaching/learning process, feelings of helplessness and feelings of inadequacy led to unbearably painful feelings, fatigue, and loss of hope.

"Mental healthwise, I just couldn't stand it anymore" was Sharon's reply to the question, "What made you decide to leave teaching?" She continued, "I know a lot of people right away they hear you leave teaching... 'Well, it's because of the salary; you don't make enough.'" But, salary was not a reason she left teaching,

she had recently taken a job where she was earning less. As a single parent of a young daughter, she had enjoyed the summer months with her daughter; however, she felt “like my stress level the other nine months out of the year wasn’t compensated enough by that.” She talked of the tension she brought “home with me every night” from the difficult days with her students. The overwhelming workload was also a factor creating more frustration and fatigue. “My first year was horrible....I was tense all the time.” Even though she would take “mental health days,” to work at home on “huge boxes of Individual Educational Plans” (IEPS) for her special education students, they were never ending. She felt as though she “would never get to sit and relax or be sick.” She would often stay late at school, but she “just never felt like I accomplished anything.” Karen felt the same frustration and fatigue. She didn’t believe that it was ever “going to change.” She believed the difficult days, the heavy workload, and long hours was the way it was going to be “no matter what you do.”

Admitting that she tended to be an optimist and a perfectionist, she said, “I like to do a very good job at what I do, and it was impossible.” Karen lamented, “I felt called to [my students]...but I couldn’t handle the environment.” Sharon and Karen gave up after two laps—two years—of teaching.

Dorothy talked about the concern her husband had as he watched her frustration and fatigue build during her teaching years. "My husband lived through it." He would tell her, "You don't have to teach...it's too much for you. It's wearing you down...stressed out, makes you cry." When she began having "stomach problems," she decided that three years of the frustration and long hours she had endured as a teacher were enough. She summarized her feelings: "I just felt like my mind was consumed to a point I wasn't living a life of my own.

Todd held out the longest of these participants—five laps—five years—in a special education classroom, a position that he originally took as a stepping stone to his loved field of history. He fulfilled his commitment to earn special education certification that took two nights a week for three years. As we talked, his voice filled with emotion as he remembered, "I just couldn't emotionally do it, and if you go [into the classroom with kids] and shut off,...it's a Catch 22.... That's not helping them at all either." When Todd talked of his final decision, he sighed and thoughtfully answered this way: "I tried not to bring [my frustration] home. I didn't want to bring it home. I left it at the school doors. I really did. At least I thought I was doing that." When his wife talked to him about being "short-tempered with [my] children and with her," he realized that he was bringing it

home after all. His wife was also concerned that he was just not “a happy person.” He realized that “stress was building up...and I started dealing differently with [our] kids. That’s when the light started going on.” His conclusion was similar to the conclusion of many of my other participants. He believed that when teaching begins to negatively affect your home life, “that’s when you’re done for.”

Throughout the interviews, these participants talked of their disillusioning experiences, their situations involving violence, their lack of support, their overwhelming workload—culminating in their feelings of frustration, stress, and fatigue. I thought of them in the Steeplechase, circling the laps and jumping the hurdles. Running the Steeplechase is comparable to teaching in many ways. Yet, in the end, the hurdles, the laps, and the drag from the weight of wet shoes are part of a sport. It does not parallel the depth of the despair, frustration, and fatigue felt by these former teachers.

Steeplechasers? No. Sprinters!

“And that’s definitely what it came down to: Having an opportunity to serve...”

Connor

Two participants, Anna and Connor, had not planned on long-term careers

as teachers. In a sense, they had not chosen to enter the grueling Steeplechase, but rather the 50 yard Sprint. As Anna said, "I have never been able to see myself teaching my entire life....I wanted to do other things in life, too." They had experienced disillusionment and stress in teaching, but those feelings were not the primary reasons for leaving. They both decided to embrace opportunities for public service in areas related to teaching, but not in public schools. Connor was interested in using his political science degree and experience in a position in state government, though he felt a commitment to young people and teaching: "I don't think I would have left, frankly, if I didn't have the opportunity [in my new position] to continue teaching in some way." He remains involved with students by organizing groups interested in social issues. Anna spent summer months using her foreign language knowledge working in other countries and has decided to earn a degree in this area. "I am focusing on infectious diseases...because I've always had a passion for medical...sciences and because of teaching." She will be able to combine both in her new career. Both Connor and Anna talked of the respect they had for the work of teachers. Anna commented, "I don't know how teachers do it and stay with it...and keep their hearts in it the whole time....I can't imagine doing that and not getting burned

out.” Both Anna and Connor taught three years and are now happily engaged in their new careers.

Summary

These twenty participants began the teacher's Steeplechase with energy, enthusiasm, and confidence that they would become successful runners, successful teachers. As they faced the reality of the race, the daily life of a teacher, their energy, enthusiasm, and for some, their confidence began to diminish. Disillusionment set in. The hurdles were real and higher than they had imagined, and for many of these teachers the hurdles presented were ones for which they had never trained. Making the decision to leave teaching, however, was not easy. Each participant's specific reasons were linked in individual, complex ways. Yet, there were common elements among them. Disillusionment was the initiating factor for the negative feelings of the participants. Two of the participants experienced disillusionment, but they left teaching because of new opportunities in other service careers. For one young man, his new spouse's job in another state gave him time to consider his disillusionment, the predictable salary in light of future family responsibilities, and the education needed to acquire a license in the other state. He chose to leave teaching. Two of the

women teachers, struggling with disillusionment and overload, decided to quit and stay home with children. Low salary was the one specific negative aspect of teaching along with their disillusionment that caused two men to leave their positions. One other disillusioned participant left specifically because he felt he had been ignored and neither respected nor supported as he had been promised. Other serious negative aspects of teaching coupled with disillusionment caused thirteen of the other participants to leave their careers. Five of them left because of the conflicts and violent encounters with students. Seven others left because they reached the stage of career burnout: physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion.

I thought about the sign high on the corner of the old, red brick stadium and the runner silhouetted underneath. *Going the distance*. I was saddened that these bright, enthusiastic teachers were no longer in the teachers' Steeplechase.

Looking Back

"Nothing is at last sacred but the integrity of your own mind."

(Emerson, 1841/2003, p. 356)

When the twenty former teachers of the Des Moines Public Schools began their journey to become successful teachers, they did so with the confidence that

they would meet their goals. Throughout their teacher education programs, their college course work, and first-hand experiences, this confidence was supported. When hired by the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS), they went into their new positions with the confidence and expectations for success. Three of the participants who left the DMPS had planned that teaching might only be one step on their career paths, and when they left, they felt that they had fulfilled their goals. Seventeen of these former teachers, however, had planned on a life-time in teaching. Some participants alluded to this belief, while others, including Linda, clearly stated it. "When I did my student teaching, I thought, 'This is definitely what I am supposed to do with my life.'" Even though three of these participants had begun teaching with the thought and possibility of leaving, all twenty left with feelings of disillusionment, frustration, and stress, and many were also fatigued to the point of burnout.

When people set out to achieve a goal, regardless of whether or not the goal is achieved, it is natural to evaluate the experience, to review the process, to seek an understanding of the outcome. Hindsight is a gift that we are given in order to learn from our experiences and improve the human condition. We are capable of analyzing and reevaluating our past. As these former teachers

became involved in the process of rethinking and reliving their stories, they began to more thoughtfully evaluate their experiences. Initially, when the participants looked back on their teacher education programs, their comments were quite positive in regard to the programs in which they had participated. Ron felt his preparation “was great from the theoretical standpoint of teaching us to think about...and [to be] excited about teaching.” Dorothy recalled that “they really prepared me...[in] how to write a lesson, how to write a behavioral objective...or [to] teach the skills.” The great majority of these former teachers also fondly remembered their student teaching experiences. Sentiments included “student teaching was probably the best;...I really had a good student teaching experience....That was time well spent.” Greg especially felt that student teaching had reinforced his belief in himself and his “knack for teaching and...[my] way with kids.” Nevertheless, as we continued to discuss the difficulties they had experienced when they began teaching in their own classrooms, they became more candid in their criticisms of their pre-service teacher education experiences. Patty exclaimed with a sigh, “I really was disappointed, and I think after you graduate, you can tell them how you felt.”

“...you think everything is set up and you’re going to come in, and you’re going to teach. But there are lots of underlying stuff that they just don’t tell you about.” Judy

The findings from the combined experiences of these participants revealed disillusionment with a number of aspects in teaching which became factors in their decisions to leave. These former teachers were discovering the realities of a teaching career, and that this reality, in some cases, created such personal difficulties, they felt they must abandon their careers. In listening closely to their stories, I found that in subtle ways the participants often turned to the age old theme of regret: “If only....” What many of these people regretted was that they had not been made more aware of the truths of teaching before they began. Judy expressed this regret: “Before you get into teaching, if there is just some way to know more realistically what it’s like...so you’re not completely lost.”

When these participants agreed to be a part of this study, they committed themselves to the goal of gaining greater insight into the reasons teachers were leaving teaching. As the participants and I explored their experiences and thoughts about their teacher education programs, we discovered that one source of the disillusionment and frustration stemmed from a great disparity between the

knowledge, skills, and experiences gained during their teacher education and the knowledge, skills, and experiences they needed to be successful in the actual teaching positions they eventually acquired. For example, although they had had experiences in a variety of classroom situations, eleven participants had had no experience in working in schools where students were often from homes with lower socioeconomic status. Yet, their teaching positions were in those types of schools. Similarly, eight participants had no experience working in schools where students were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Yet, their teaching positions were with diverse student bodies. Dorothy remembered that “it was just nerve wracking. I guess I wasn’t used to a big city, and then [the school] was classified as an inner city school, so it was different types of kids, different types of parents” from her preparation experiences. Allen’s student teaching had been in a small rural school, and when he “first started teaching...I was shocked....I had to learn a lot about the way it was” in a large inner city high school. Anna regretted that she had not had more preparation for the troubling situations she encountered with her students “because I had no idea....It was just lack of experience....I knew there were kids who grew up with their parents in jail or with their parents doing drugs out of their home, or I knew about teenage pregnancy

and about abuse and neglect, but I just didn't have experience."

There were other areas where differences existed between their experiences in their teacher preparation programs and their actual teaching situations. Five of the twenty participants were teaching at different grade levels than they had during their student teaching experiences. Eight were teaching in different content areas from their student teaching experiences. For Jeff, moving from a more serious high school environment to middle school meant that "obviously the level of effort changed...from concentrating mostly on content to concentrating mostly on discipline." Jim's words echoed Jeff's. His student teaching at the high school level was "a piece of cake." However in his middle school position, "the first...two or three weeks were nightmares....Nothing prepared me for what to expect." Ron also found "these middle school kids need...serious structure....I just wasn't ready to give the structure...[nor]...the discipline....I was completely unprepared." He admitted he didn't have "much training in discipline." Sharon had expected "smaller numbers" in her classes similar to her preparation to be a special education teacher:

I expected to be able to work with smaller groups of kids...working one on one....It's a lot different when you have your own classroom....It's hard to

compare 12 kids and two associates [during my preparation] with...one associate and sometimes throughout the day, I could have 25 kids in my room.

Two participants, Todd and Linda, were teaching in self-contained special education programs while only temporarily certified in special education and without any experience in these types of classrooms during their teacher education programs. In accepting these positions, they promised to begin taking the required courses to attain their required special education certification. Both of these people fulfilled their promises, but at the beginning Linda said, "I did my student teaching at [a private elementary school] in kindergarten and fourth grade. Her student teaching position was "quite a big difference" from her first job as a special education teacher in a special school for students with behavior and other emotional problems.

In discussing the differences between their teacher education programs and their teaching experiences, the participants expressed concern most often over issues of classroom management. As Judy lamented, "When I came into teaching, I was doing completely different things than what I had...seen...when I was in college." With the exception of Karen, who felt she was prepared because

she was required “to take a classroom management class,” the other participants regretted not having more experience with classroom management. Many felt as Ron did: classroom management “was something I was completely unprepared for.” He told of “one day...for...five minutes...my teacher started acting out...goofing around...when I had to give a mock lesson” but other than that he had had no experience where he had to keep “things under control. So that was a big problem.” Sally was also surprised in her teaching position when she “had to set up a behavior plan...and all that was new to me.” Looking back, she felt that “part of my training wasn’t very good because the kids [I had worked with during college] were just ready...and eager...to learn....We never talked about management. There wasn’t any management strategy...that was...an unexpected thing.” Allen agreed. “The preparation was that you could find the right work for them to do, [and] there wouldn’t be any problems...and so it’s this ideal world.” Connor clearly made this point: “I think classroom management is absolutely critical, and I think more could be done.”

Beyond the regular types of discipline problems associated with classroom management, participants told of being ill prepared for the disturbing and violent situations they encountered. Eleven participants talked of being verbally abused

by their students. Six participants had also been physically abused by their students. And three reported witnessing verbal and/or physical abuse of other colleagues. None of these former teachers reported seeing, experiencing, or talking about any of these kinds of behaviors during their college education programs. Sharon said, "I wasn't given the tools...in college experience or course work....The situations weren't as severe in practicums as I had in my actual teaching experience." Barbara was at the elementary level and "had never dealt with such 'mad' little kids! [College] didn't really prepare me for the environment." Judy summed up her thoughts:

I'm trying to think if they ever said anything about [being called names] in a college classroom. I can't remember them ever talking about that kind of a discipline problem....They always said, 'There's going to be children in trouble,' but they don't say they're going to yell at you....They don't tell you that in college. They don't prepare you for that kind of thing.

Several of these former teachers talked of other areas where they felt more preparation was needed. Karen was "extremely disillusioned by—and never prepared for in my wildest dreams—" having so many abused children in her classes. She also had not realized that "every school has its own degree of

politics, and that was something that was not discussed at all.” Judy agreed about the

politics....They don't tell you how the system works, what the policies are...the system behind teaching. You're not just in your own classroom. You have to work with the social studies teachers; you have to work with...standards. They don't tell you that maybe the thing you are teaching isn't the highest priority of the people in your town....It's just all the things that go on behind teaching...dealing with the parents...how you have to compromise when you think you shouldn't. They don't tell you that kind of stuff.

One of the greatest regrets of these former teachers was that they were not exposed to more and varied teaching situations. They agreed with Linda: “I wished that I would have had more opportunity...to visit classrooms and be in classrooms.” Anna felt privileged that she had been able to observe although she had seen “some of [the teachers] teach the way I don't want to teach, and some of them were not that passionate about what they were doing [nor]...very open to students....It was great to see the striking differences among them.” Several participants, however, had specific concerns about the lack of value of their

practica. Ron was “tutoring students [which] was completely different than teaching a class.” Patty’s practicum teacher only allowed her to do “spelling tests....Once a week I would go and that was it....I really didn’t feel like I got a real good experience from that.” A few participants spoke negatively about their student teaching and cooperating teachers. Terrance told of his arrival for his first student teaching assignment in middle school physical education:

So I walked in, and there were all these kids....They were just yelling and screaming, and I didn’t know who I was looking for....I sat my things down, and then she walked out and gave me a whistle and said, “They’re yours.”

That was my introduction....That week I knew I was not going to teach in junior high.

Allen was also not impressed with his cooperating teacher. “She was very flexible with what I wanted to do....But at the same time, I didn’t learn anything from her.”

In spite of these overall comments, participants were very generous in their attempt to acknowledge the difficulties in creating programs to adequately educate teachers for the realities they will face. Connor was very honest in his observation:

My...program was excellent, but [teaching] was certainly a challenge,

and...I don't think anything can really prepare you for that....It's trial by fire....So I understand that that is probably part of the process...getting in there and doing the job right away....I don't know. Maybe there is only so much [they] can teach.

Summary

Evaluating their teacher education programs became a paradoxical experience for the participants. Although there were many positive comments about their class work, practica, and student teaching, they were also able to appreciate the gaps in their education and experiences as well as the difficulty for those programs to truly prepare students for the reality of the classroom. All the participants experienced disillusionment: Their confidence waned as they faced many problems in their teaching positions which they had not encountered during their education programs. Classroom management posed particularly difficult situations. Sometimes these problems were because of the differences in the socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds of their students in contrast to the students they worked with during college. Similarly, problems were encountered because participants accepted positions outside their fields or at grade levels where they had had no previous experience. Several participants again discussed feeling ill-

prepared to deal with students with serious home and personal problems and students who were being abused. Some of these former teachers also talked about their surprise regarding the relationships among staff members and the politics in schools. Finally, participants felt especially unprepared for the verbal and violent assaults to either themselves or their colleagues. These former teachers believed that more could be done during their teacher education programs to relieve some of the disillusionment.

Moving On

"Yet knowing how way leads on to way

I doubted if I should ever come back"

(Frost, 1959/1992, p. 84)

At the time of this study, the twenty former teachers interviewed were in a variety of careers and positions. They had given up the teachers' Steeplechase and moved on to other challenging endeavors. Eight former teachers were now starting careers in the business world, all but one continuing to stay in the Des Moines area. Five of the women participants were staying at home with their young children. Three participants were working in positions related to education, one of whom was working part-time while also staying at home taking care of her

baby and husband. Three participants were not yet settled, exploring different possibilities. One participant was an elected government official. Throughout the conversations with these former teachers, they often contrasted their experiences while teaching with their experiences in their new situations. Not surprisingly, they generally described their new positions with positive terms which contrasted to the negative characteristics they associated with their teaching careers.

"...but came a time where I needed to move on." Dorothy

In discussing their disillusionment and difficulties in their classrooms, many participants had felt thwarted in their desire to *teach* as they had envisioned, to do the work that they had believed they were prepared for at the time they left their teacher education programs. They had not realized some of the negative aspects they would encounter in a teaching position. In their new positions, several former teachers had feelings similar to Todd's description. In his business career, he appreciated his new project oriented work. He explained that "with students there is no such thing as a beginning and an ending....[But] working with projects, you see all the stages from the beginning to the end. And, that is nice." Participants expressed appreciation for other aspects of their new

situations. Karen, in a service-oriented position, appreciated working in an environment where she felt she was a “team player. It’s not, you’re here [and the administration there].” The physical workplace was also mentioned. Dorothy was enjoying her new workplace in the business sector: “Restrooms! They’ve got soap! They’ve got paper towels! The floors are CLEAN!” In general, the participants talked of “less stress” and more pleasant working environments. As Todd concluded, “It is a challenge unlike teaching...because there is not as much emotion involved. I can handle the mental challenges all right; the emotional challenges just wore me out.”

The greater monetary compensation was also a positive contrast to their teaching salaries. Dorothy talked of her appreciation of being paid for “overtime, time and a half. My time means money...more responsibility...and you pay me for it....Nice!” Robert also commented appreciatively on his higher salary, “and anything extra I get paid for it.” Richard, like Todd, now worked in a field that was project oriented, and he “felt pretty good at the end [of a difficult project]. I got a nice bonus.” These people appreciated the benefits of the extra money, but they also felt they were being respected and thanked, as Dorothy described it, at “a level of professionalism.”

The most commonly expressed differences from teaching that the participants experienced in their new positions were their feelings of personal freedom and control. Linda's new career as an entrepreneurial businesswoman allowed her to "have more control...I didn't [in teaching]. I knew what needed to be done, and I knew what was right, but I didn't have any control over that."

Some participants talked of the benefits of freedom and control over their time. In her teaching position as an elementary special education teacher, she rarely even had time for a lunch without students. She exclaimed, "[Now]...45 minute lunch time, free! I don't have to answer to anybody." Jeff was also impressed: "I get an hour for lunch....That's like a guilty feeling to actually sit down and have time to eat...instead of the 17 minutes" when he was teaching. He was also appreciative of the breaks "when I need a break....Teaching is six hours a day [and] there is no break." He also remarked that "one of the nice differences is I don't bring work home....I can't imagine a teacher not bringing home work."

Another participant, Robert, was now in a position closely related to public school teaching but with differences that he appreciated such as having his "own space....I can set my own directions....I'm not so boxed in. I'm able to be a lot more creative." He also felt that he had more time and freedom to "communicate"

with his family during the working day. Time and freedom to meet the needs of family and children was a theme of several of the participants' comments. Jim is now a consultant for a corporation outside of Iowa and works out of his own home: "If I am not scheduled to be somewhere, I'm here....If I've got a child that's sick or if I've got a parent conference...I can be there for that...a lot of control... that is nice." The women who were now making careers of homemaking were especially aware of the differences from their teaching careers, although some, like Patty, missed "the mental stimulation and the challenge" of teaching. However, they were discovering the benefits of the personal freedom and control. As Judy said, "I'm busy. I didn't realize that taking care of a household was that much work. I'm just more free to do whatever I want." She was looking forward to volunteering in the community along with taking care of her family.

"...but there's always one or two kids or twenty-five kids that smile back at you."

Janet

The often-quoted words of Robert Frost (1959/1992), doubting "if I should ever come back," were not prophetic for some of my participants. In spite of the difficult experiences they had faced while teaching and the positive benefits of their current situations, some of my participants, these tenacious teacher-

Steeplechasers, talked of returning to the track, returning to their teaching careers. Todd was one participant who thought seriously about returning, though not to the self-contained special education classroom. His tenacity had kept him in that teacher's Steeplechase for many laps, and "the kids...made it all seem worthwhile." He keeps his "certificate up...and if a position opens" where his children attend school, "pay would be drastically cut, but it might be worth it." He believed teaching would give him more time with his own children. He also knew that as a teacher he felt "like you were actually doing something...giving back to society." He found that he missed "that altruistic feeling. I think teachers really touch."

Several other participants talked nostalgically about their teaching careers, "I miss teaching. It's not every day that I do, but some days more than others." Jeff's comment was not uncommon among the participants, although because of the greater salary in his current position, he believed he was not likely to return to the classroom. Ron and Richard talked in a similar vein; yet, they, too, would probably not return. Ron admitted, "I do miss working with the kids sometimes, but then sometimes...I just don't feel like I have the patience that I used to have." Richard's "certificate is expired, so I would have to do a lot of work, but I think

about it.”

Sally, now a stay-at-home mother with three young children, also thinks about her future. With her Masters Degree in reading and curriculum and four years with a variety of elementary level experiences, she has many options. “I would be open to going back....I have kind of considered [it].... You have your summers off and your other vacations, but otherwise you’re really inflexible, so...if I taught full time and couldn’t go and help” in her own children’s classrooms, that would be a drawback for her. “So, I don’t know if I would go back full time...but I would consider...a half-time position.” Patty was excited about returning to teaching someday. After her experiences as an associate and then “traveling” her first years, she was hoping “to get my own room. I think it would be a lot easier.” Janet, another stay-at-home mother, was also considering returning. She was planning to substitute teach

just in case I want to go back...because I love to see that little light bulb go on....When they go, “Oh! I get it!” or when they finally learn how to read.

You know...that little spark of “OOOOH! I get it. I get it.” That’s what I truly, truly love!

Summary

Ten of the participants were satisfied in their current positions and pleased with their decision to leave teaching. Of the other ten participants, five men, all in business careers, talked of missing teaching, but only one of them might seriously consider returning. Of the five women currently homemakers, one was definitely planning to return to public school teaching, while three were contemplating the possibility, and one did not expect to return to teaching. Others were not interested in returning to their original goals of becoming teachers.

Summary of Findings

In this chapter, I have tried to remain faithful and respectful to the voices of these former teachers and relate the experiences as told to me. These men and women have shared their thoughts and feelings as they became teachers, and they have described their disillusionment and the frustrations they endured during their teaching careers. As we reflected, we were taking a journey together, moving toward greater understanding of why teachers may be leaving the profession. Although there were differences in their experiences and situations in becoming teachers and accepting their first placements, there were similarities in the development of their feelings of disillusionment as they began teaching. The

difficulties they faced in dealing with classroom management, discipline, and motivation, were common among all the participants. Some participants were also disillusioned when they realized they were not able to give equal time and attention to all their students. Some students demanded more than their fair share. These former teachers had become frustrated when they were unable to help all children who deserved the same time and attention. Participants were also disillusioned when they recognized that they could not always help students with severe home and personal problems. Their own emotional responses to the needs of these students caused stress and pain. The reality of working with students, helping them learn and grow, is difficult, and as these participants confronted this reality, questions about remaining in teaching began to enter their minds.

As other problems arose, leaving teaching became a more serious consideration. Many of the participants did not feel they were adequately supported by the school district or the families of their students. In some situations, the conditions and resources for successfully working and teaching students were not provided. This was not only disillusioning, but also led to frustration and stress during their teaching days. The level of violence the

participants encountered in their classrooms and schools was another unexpected aspect of teaching. For several of the participants, including the women teachers as they became pregnant, disillusionment combined with conflicts and violence were the determining factors in their decisions to leave. The monetary needs of their families were serious issues for four of the men participants and played into their decision making process. For two of these men, it was the main determining cause coupled with their disillusionment. Salary, however, was a paradoxical issue in this study. For several women, the salary was so low that it was insignificant in their decisions to leave the profession. Disillusionment, frustration, and fatigue from the amount of work—particularly the take-home work—caused several of the women to rethink teaching as a compatible career with motherhood and homemaking. Eventually, four of the women participants chose to leave the classroom and become full-time homemakers.

Eight of the participants left their careers after the disillusionment and difficulties in their jobs developed into frustration and fatigue and became physically, mentally, and emotionally unbearable. The feelings they felt at the end of their time of teaching corresponded to the condition commonly known as

burnout. If teaching is like running in a Steeplechase, these teachers had come up against the highest hurdle and to the end of their own race.

In the conversations with the participants, we often reflected on their teacher education programs and what might have made a difference in their experience and choices to remain in the classroom. As we explored their experiences and ideas, many strong feelings were revealed, both positive and negative, toward their programs. Although they praised some aspects such as preparation in writing lesson plans and developing enthusiasm for a teaching career, they regretted the few opportunities they were given in real, practical, and diverse teaching situations. In this group of twenty participants, only six had taken teaching positions that were fairly similar to their experiences in college in terms of the grade level, subject matter content, socioeconomic, ethnic, and or racial backgrounds of their students. Other criticisms reverted to the theme of disillusionment stemming from the difficulty in areas related to classroom management. Not providing knowledge about school cultures and politics or a truer picture of probable resources and support were also disappointing characteristics of their programs.

Finally, the participants were eager to talk about their current jobs,

whether in the business community, other helping professions, or at home with their own children. The positive differences from teaching that they expressed were similar: less emotional stress, more personal freedom and control in their work and lives, and more satisfying feelings of accomplishment. Many were also pleased when they reported that they felt their higher salaries were more in line with their work and time commitments. Many also were impressed with the more comfortable working conditions and environments such as longer lunch times and cleaner restrooms and work areas. On the other hand, many missed the feelings of personal worth they had felt as teachers, and they continued to respect and admire those who continue in the meaningful work of teaching, although only a few of these former teachers continue to hold the possibility of returning.

Twenty people chose to become teachers. Three participants had had ideas of pursuing other careers after a few years of teaching, however, only two of these teachers left while still feeling positive about their lives as teachers. They had experienced disillusionment and the frustrations shared by other participants, but they left only because other opportunities presented themselves. The other eighteen people left teaching because of some

combination of the negative aspects associated with the work of teaching. The ultimate goal of this research study is to find greater understanding of why some teachers do not continue their careers in teaching, and through this understanding, to explore changes that might improve retention. I believe the stories of these former teachers will help fulfill this purpose. My journey will continue as I try to fulfill my purpose: to tell them.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I began this study in search of the reasons that teachers in the Des Moines Public Schools (DMPS) were leaving the profession in the early years of their careers. My interest in DMPS's teacher attrition is threefold. First, research has shown that a teacher's years of experience is related to the quality of their teaching and the achievement of their students (Berliner, 2000). I want the excellence established in student achievement in the DMPS to continue, and this will require that experienced teachers remain in the schools. Second, the economic resources of the DMPS are limited, and the continual recruitment and induction activities take resources from other needed materials, programs, and personnel. Third, because I had experienced painful feelings of disillusionment and failure in my own first years of teaching, I was concerned for the well-being of DMPS's newest teachers.

The purpose of this study was based on the assumption that having a greater understanding of teacher attrition, DMPS would be able to more effectively improve the rate of teacher retention. To facilitate this purpose, I chose a qualitative research design to explore the experiences of former DMPS

teachers. The stories of twenty former teachers as they told of becoming teachers, their experiences while teaching, their reflections on their education programs, and their current situations are the main sources of data for the study. I used a combination of methodologies from grounded theory (Strauss, 1987) and narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

These research questions guided the semi-structured interviews: What reasons do former DMPS teachers give for leaving the profession? What experiences converged to influence their decisions to leave the teaching profession? As I had anticipated, the experiences of these former teachers and their reasons for leaving were varied and complex; yet, several commonalities in their stories emerged as patterns and themes. All twenty of the participants reported disillusionment with teaching. This disillusionment was associated with problems relating to classroom management issues: motivating students, disciplining and keeping order in the classroom, and dealing with their own emotions stemming both from their inability to give a fair amount of time and attention to all of their students and also from their work with students living difficult personal lives. Further, disillusionment for two thirds of the participants was related to teaching in out-of-field positions, in either subject matter, grade

level, or with students from diverse socioeconomic or ethnic backgrounds. Other reasons for leaving included the lack of professional support, an environment of conflict and violence, low salary, and an overload of work that required too much of their energy and time. Some of the participants left when disillusionment combined with one or two of the other issues, while a third of the participants were overwhelmed with many of them and experienced career burnout. Two of the disillusioned participants who had planned that teaching would only be a steppingstone to other careers left mainly because other career opportunities presented themselves.

In the Discussion portion of this chapter, I review these findings followed by the Conclusions and the Implications for reducing the rate of teacher attrition. The chapter ends with my recommendations for further research.

Discussion

In developing the narrative inquiry methodology, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) recognized that problems move across time, linking past, present, and future: The background of a situation is important for a clear understanding of a present situation. This was particularly true for this study. The findings on the

reasons teachers leave teaching were enhanced by the knowledge of the participants' paths to becoming teachers.

Several studies have linked both teacher attrition and retention with various experiences and attitudes of pre-service teachers (Andrew, 1990; Ellsbree, 1939; Hoffman, 1981; Lortie, 1975; Pigge & Marso, 1992; 1997; Sugg, 1978; Sweeny et al., 1991; Waller, 1965; Warren, 1989). For example, teacher attrition has resulted when people plan to use teaching as a steppingstone to marriage or another profession. Three participants in this study planned to follow that path which is consistent with normal adult development and life cycles (Glickman et al., 2001; Grissmer & Kirby, 1987; Huberman, 1993; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olssen, 1991). Teaching also has been found to be a second or fall-back choice (Huberman, 1993; Lortie, 1975). Two of the former teachers did explain their choices to become teachers in this way.

Studies have shown an association between having family members in teaching with people choosing the profession (Lortie, 1975; Marso & Pigge, 1992). However, further research (Marso & Pigge, 1997) found that having family members in teaching was not related to teacher retention. In this study, eleven former teachers were influenced by their family members in teaching to become

teachers, but did not remain, supporting the research by Marso and Pigge (1997).

When teachers quit teaching, there is often an undercurrent of questions about their commitment to teaching or their ability to teach. Previous studies (Andrew, 1990; Pigge & Marso, 1992; 1997; Sweeny et al., 1991) have shown that commitment to teaching at the onset is associated with remaining. In light of the background information from some of these participants, it might be expected that these people would not remain as teachers. For three of them who planned to leave this is true. However, once the choice of a teaching career was made, these teachers became committed to becoming successful teachers.

The evidence of commitment to teaching was demonstrated by seven of these former teachers as they worked through up to five years of substitute teaching and associate positions before acquiring full-time teaching positions and contracts. An indication of three of these former teachers was shown when they persisted even after negative experiences during their weeks of student teaching. Some studies have found that negative student teaching experiences are associated with preservice teachers choosing other careers after college (Andrew, 1990; Sweeny et al., 1991). This finding is not supported here. Finally,

nine of these participants had pursued other careers before deciding to become teachers which meant for most of them further education and the expenditure of time, energy, and money, other displays of commitment. This present study does not support previous research linking commitment at the time of choosing teaching with remaining in the profession.

All of the participants looked forward to the years ahead, teaching and helping young people. Their original enthusiasm and energy returned and reverberated in their voices as they told their stories of choosing teaching. These findings support previous research on the motivations of people to enter teaching which rank the most important reasons as the desire to work with young people and the desire to be of service (Brown, 1992; Huberman, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Nelson, Garman, & Davis, 2001). These former teachers had graduated with teaching degrees from respected colleges and universities. One of them had participated in an extended program, associated with retention (Andrew, 1990). Three others had earned Masters degrees in their first few years while teaching. The evidence garnered from the stories of these participants suggests that these former teachers were competent, committed, and prepared to become successful

teachers. None of these former teachers ever imagined the disillusionment and difficulties they would face that would lead them away from teaching.

Disillusionment

Becoming disillusioned is a complex process. In a sense it implies falling. First, there is a falling away of a veil of illusion, and second, there is a falling away of expectation and hope. In telling stories, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest metaphor as a way of describing experience. I chose the metaphor of athletes at the Drake Relays, warming up and preparing for their events. The teachers were the Steeplechase runners as they struggled to overcome the hurdles, or the obstacles, encountered in their careers. Unlike the runners in the Steeplechase, however, these participants became disillusioned because they often faced hurdles for which they had not prepared. Neither their life experiences, working with children and young people in various situations, nor their teacher education programs, classwork, practica, or student teaching experiences, adequately presented the reality they encountered in their teaching positions.

In the research presented in *Schoolteacher*, Lortie (1975) describes *teaching* as understood by teachers *to be helping students learn*. This is the most

important goal of teachers. The participants in this study anticipated and looked forward to teaching, as teachers define it. What they found, though, were difficulties in motivating and disciplining students, which prevented them from effectively teaching and initiated their disillusionment. Problems in motivation and discipline were consistent with research on problems and failures of new teachers throughout the last century (Almack & Lang, 1928; Ganser, 1999; Ingersoll, 1999; 2001; Lortie, 1975).

Three other classroom management problems causing disillusionment emerged in this study. The first was explained by participants as their inability to share their time and attention more equally among their students. Caused by the special behavior or academic needs of particular students who required more time for help or discipline, they felt they were being unfair to the students who were waiting for their attention. The inability of school personnel or district policies to rectify this inequality was also disturbing. Naming the *inequality of time and attention for students* as an issue in the difficulties associated with classroom management may be a more specific finding than in previous studies, adding to the research on the problems of new teachers and the reasons teachers leave.

A second classroom management problem among some of these former teachers was caused by characteristics associated with Empathetic Stress Syndrome, the empathy and concern they had for their students' safety and happiness in their lives away from school. This syndrome is found among people in helping professions, including teachers. Often, students view teachers as safe and choose to confide in them about events or conditions in their personal lives. Teachers may become too empathetic and begin to experience the depression or fears of their students. They may experience this empathetic stress to a degree that it becomes difficult to separate their own professional and personal lives as found in previous research (Greer & Greer as cited in Brownell, 1997).

The third area of difficulty in classroom management was associated with out-of-field teaching. Through an analysis of their experiences prior to teaching, including their preservice assignments, in comparison with the teaching positions in which they had been placed, only six of the twenty participants were teaching in the subject matter, grade level, and cultural environment similar to their educational or other previous experiences. Four of them were teaching in subject matter areas where they had no certification. One participant was teaching part of his day in his subject matter and the other part of the day he was not. Four

were certified in their subject matter area but had not had student teaching experiences in those areas. Five participants were teaching at grade levels where they had not had previous experience. Two people were hired into positions that were similar to the ones in which they had had difficulties during their student teaching. Finally, and perhaps most problematic, most of these former Des Moines teachers had had no previous experiences working with students of diverse ethnic, racial, or lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet, the city schools in which they were teaching were filled with students of all kinds of backgrounds.

Previous research has found that teacher attrition is associated with teachers being placed in positions for which they were not experienced (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Ingersoll, 1998). It is not surprising that these former teachers became disillusioned by their difficulties in classroom management issues. Keeping order, motivating, and disciplining are difficult even when teachers are in their areas of expertise. This study is consistent with out-of-field teaching as a cause of teacher attrition.

Research has shown that becoming a competent successful teacher is a developmental process. The beginning teacher moves unevenly through a series

of stages beginning with anticipation and survival followed by a natural period of feelings of disillusionment (Berliner, 2000; Brock & Grady, 2001; Dodd, 2001; Glickman et al., 2001; Marso & Pigge, 1997). Ideally, new teachers navigate through these stages, move on through a stage of rejuvenation, return to anticipation, and a recommitment to teaching ensues (Kortman, Honaker, Enz, Berliner, & Appleton, College of Education, ASU). However, for the former teachers in this study, as the anticipation faded, as the daily struggles in classroom management continued, the feelings of disillusionment only grew stronger.

Lack of professional support and respect

The lack of support and respect for teachers continues to be found as a problem for new teachers and a reason teachers leave (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Ganser, 1999; Ingersoll, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Natale, 1993; Shann, 1998; Shen, 1997a, 1997b). Among these former DMPS teachers, the word *support* became paradoxical. Personal support was positive and associated with friendship among colleagues and building level administrators. Professional support was negative and associated with district administrators, the community, and government agencies. Some participants felt unsupported because of their inexperience with

the politics or the cultures of their environment. Lack of support in discipline situations, resources, and facilities were also cited. Findings in this study are consistent with previous studies which list lack of support as reasons for dissatisfaction and leaving.

Further, many of these participants were disillusioned and frustrated by the lack of support by the parents of their students. This is consistent with studies reporting that lack of parental support is associated with teachers' dissatisfaction and leaving (Natale, 1993; Shann, 1998).

In review of the literature, the lack of professional support was linked to a lack of professional respect. In previous research this lack of respect was felt by teachers when they were bypassed in decision making which affected their teaching and their students. Lack of respect was also felt when they had no real control over their professional lives (Ganser, 1999; Ingersoll, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Shann, 1998). One person left teaching because he felt he was treated both disrespectfully and unprofessionally when the district continued to ignore a promise they had made to him. Other participants told of not being supported professionally or respectfully when students' families made false complaints against them.

Most of the participants in this study did not speak openly about feelings of the lack of autonomy or influence in decision making. However, many of these participants seemed to hold a certain fatalism over their situations, implying that they lacked control or influence over their teaching situation, the politics, or policies in their schools or the district. This kind of fatalism seemed to diminish hope of improving the difficulties they were experiencing, adding to their doubts about remaining in a teaching career. In this way, findings from this study do support previous studies relating lack of support as a reason for leaving teaching (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Ganser, 1999; Ingersoll, 1999; Lortie, 1975; Stinnett, 1970).

Violence

Eight former teachers in this study talked of their surprise and dismay at the level of conflict and violence they experienced in their teaching situations. These conflicts and instances of violence were influential factors in their decisions to leave teaching, including three of the pregnant women elementary teachers who left because of students who continued to hit them. The day to day conflicts, assaults, and violence reported in this study appear consistent with findings on violence in schools throughout the nation (DMEA, 2002). Moreover, higher levels of violence are associated with city schools who have students from

lower socioeconomic backgrounds (Ingersoll, 1999). Although Des Moines schools generally have diverse socioeconomic student bodies, the finding of violence in DMPS is consistent with this research. Conflicts and violence arise out of differences in culture and conditions of poverty, and given the diverse demographics of the populations in cities, even medium size cities such as Des Moines, violent behaviors exist among students.

Instances of violence may cause a type of stress that has been related to teaching: post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Glick & Goldstein, 1987; Truch, 1980). This is stress resulting from physical and emotional shocks or trauma. Several of the participants in this study discussed the stress they felt as a result of their experiences with conflicts and violence in the school environment and as victims of verbal and physical assaults from students. This study supports previous reports of “battle fatigue” or PTSD among teachers.

Salary

The problem of low salary has always been associated with teaching from the beginning of public education as teaching was often short term and later perceived as a feminine occupation. Some studies continue to confirm that low salary is one of the reasons teachers leave teaching (Ingersoll, 1999; Natale,

1993) while others do not (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Shann, 1998; Stinnett, 1965; Truch, 1980). This study of DMPS former teachers supports both of these previous findings.

Gender is a factor which may create a difference in the effect of salary. Lortie (1975) found that there was a difference between men and women in the way their salaries influenced their decisions to leave. For some of the married men participants in this study, their disillusionment with teaching was made more difficult by the problems caused by their low salary. They found that the salary was not adequate to meet the needs of their growing families, and they were concerned as they looked ahead at potential earnings and realized the limits of the salary schedules. For these men, the low salary was significant in their decision to leave.

Ironically, for some of the married women with children in this study, the low salary was perceived as so low, that it was insignificant, especially when these women subtracted the child care costs from their salaries. They believed that the money earned would not make teaching worthwhile from a monetary standpoint. Finally, salary also affected two of the single people. Money was an issue causing more dissatisfaction with teaching for these two participants. Their

struggles to make ends meet created frustration, though salary was not the final reason they made their decisions to leave.

As other studies have shown, salary is a significant issue for some people, but it does not play a significant role for others in their dissatisfaction or decisions to leave teaching.

Workload and time demands

Teaching is physical, mental, and emotional work (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Lortie, 1975). Many of these former teachers told of the long hours they put in as teachers. They believed that these hours were necessary for effective teaching. Previous research has continued to report that the work demanded of teachers is extreme, and the movement toward professionalism and/or intensification has increased both the teachers' workload and time demands (Apple & Jungck, 1992; Hargreaves, 1994; Lortie, 1975; Stinnett, 1965). This present study is consistent with previous research that lists the workload and time demands as problems of new teachers and reasons teachers leave (Ganser, 2000; Ingersoll as cited in Joerger & Bremer, 2001).

Four of the women in this study were not teaching because of the demands of their work as teachers and the stress it created as they also tried to

meet the workload required as wives and mothers. This finding may be associated with research on teacher attrition that shows women under 30 are the most likely to leave teaching (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997). Eight of the ten women in this study left teaching before reaching age 30.

Career burnout

Seven of the participants in the present study explained that they had reached the stage of career burnout: the stage where the increasing difficulties they had faced overtime were debilitating, and they were no longer effective teachers. They experienced classic burnout symptoms of irritability, physical health problems, and mental and emotional exhaustion (Truch, 1980). This study supports the work of Shaw, Bensky, and Dixon (1981) who found that the difficulties in classroom management intensify as a reaction to the teacher's level of stress and fatigue. These former teachers had begun with optimism and confidence, but disillusionment deepened with increasing classroom management problems, in violent episodes, in the workload, and in the time it required. Previous research has listed these experiences as problems of new teachers and the reasons they leave (Ganser, 1999; Ingersoll as cited in Joerger & Bremer, 2001). The findings of this study support their research.

Two other factors appear to be associated with career burnout in this study: out-of-field teaching and perfectionist tendencies in teachers. First, five of these seven teachers could be classified as teaching out-of-field. They had had no previous experience with students from racially and/or socioeconomically diverse backgrounds. In addition, one participant was teaching under a temporary special education certification with no experience in special education. One was teaching at a different grade and skill level. Two certified special education teachers were used to small groups as resource teachers, but were given large groups. Out-of-field teaching leading to leaving teaching is consistent with other research (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener & Weber, 1997; Ingersoll, 1999).

Second, several former teachers talked of their perfectionist tendencies, and their inability to lower their goals and expectations of themselves as teachers. This supports other research on career burnout which occurs when teachers give maximum effort and continue to do so even when they are not succeeding (Farber, 1998). This inability to meet the expectations they have of themselves also adds to that downward spiral of emotional exhaustion caused by guilt and shame (Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Lortie, 1975).

For seven of these former teachers, the intense combination of difficulties led to their decisions to leave.

Conclusions

The stories of these former Des Moines Public School teachers reveal several explanations for teachers leaving the Des Moines schools. After listening to their stories and exploring their meanings with them, I believe the following conclusions voice our understanding of reasons teachers leave.

1. Disillusionment with teaching begins when motivated, committed new teachers face unanticipated obstacles that prevent them from *teaching, helping students to learn*. This disillusionment becomes an initial step on a path to career abandonment. For some teachers, disillusionment continues and combines with other difficulties in their teaching positions making teaching intolerable. For other teachers, disillusionment continues and creates dissatisfaction with teaching, and when they have an opportunity outside of teaching, they take it.

Disillusionment appears to be associated with five obstacles/problems in classroom management. These are: (a) difficulty in attempting to motivate students to become engaged in the learning process, (b) difficulty in attempting to keep order and discipline in the classroom, (c) difficulty in attempting to give a

fair amount of time and attention to all students, (d) difficulty in attempting to override their own stress from the empathetic feelings for students with personal problems, and (e) difficulty in attempting to be effective when teaching in an out-of-field position.

2. Teachers leave teaching when they lack the professional support and respect from administrators, parents, and society necessary to do their work effectively: *teaching, helping students to learn*. The lack of professional support and respect was also voiced by some teachers when they felt their concerns and situations were ignored.

3. Teachers leave teaching when the conflicts and violence in their teaching environments go unchecked. Five of the twenty participants in this study left teaching as a direct result of the repetitive verbal and/or physical assaults they encountered in the course of their daily work. Conflicts and violence in the school environment were also factors in others' decisions to leave.

4. Teachers leave teaching when the salary they earn does not meet the needs of their families or themselves. The significance of the salary, however, remains a paradoxical issue. It may affect married women with children somewhat differently from men with families. Nevertheless, it is associated with leaving.

5. Teachers leave teaching when the workload and time necessary to be effective teachers interferes with the needs of their families. Four of the women with families felt it was a disservice to both their students and their families to continue teaching given the demands of both on their energy and time.
6. Teachers leave teaching when their disillusionment combines with other problems of teaching and causes them such a degree of physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion that they experience *career burnout*. When seven of the participants in this study met obstacle after obstacle in their struggle to *teach*, they finally reevaluated the costs of teaching to themselves and their families and chose to leave the profession.
7. Teachers leave teaching when they choose teaching as only a first step on a path to other careers. For some in this study, teaching continues to follow the tradition as a step on a career path to other occupations within or outside education.

Implications

In evaluating the findings and conclusions of this study, there are implications for both the Des Moines Public Schools and teacher education programs.

For the Des Moines Public Schools

The policies and practices of schools and school districts play a direct role in the success and effectiveness of beginning teachers. Information gleaned from the stories of these former teachers suggests several ways the DMPS might help new teachers. Some of the suggestions are directed toward the district as a whole while others are for administrators and veteran teachers in schools receiving new teachers.

1. Leadership in the DMPS should consider ways to improve the motivation and discipline of DMPS students. Similarities among the participants in this study were the difficulties faced in motivating and disciplining students. The disillusionment with teaching began and continued to be caused by classroom management issues.
2. New teachers need to be able to work with the district in determining the most effective induction activities for their professional needs. Separate induction programs could be developed for veteran teachers new to the district; for teachers placed in positions out-of-field; and for beginning teachers with previous careers. Professional support and respect for new teachers begin with an induction program. The participants in this study had a variety of mentoring

situations at the time they joined the DMPS. Some had only the informal help of colleagues while others were assigned mentors. Some took part in more formal induction activities, although the BEST programs were not yet instituted. Overall, they did not find their induction experiences to be significant. They agreed that induction programs are important and that such programs need to address the real needs of teachers. Veteran teachers new to the district might appreciate serving on district committees or other professional activities commensurate with their experience. More individualized induction programs might help second career teachers find ways to use their previous experiences, knowledge, and skills in new ways for the benefit of students, the school, or the district. Nine of the teachers in this study had previous successful careers before deciding to become teachers.

Out-of-field teaching played a part in the difficulties these former DMPS teachers experienced. Given the current need for teachers in areas where candidates are not available, the placing of teachers out of their areas of expertise or experience will likely continue. Individual attention is especially needed for these beginning teachers. Just as some students are acknowledged as at risk and given special help to ensure their success, these teachers deserve

the same kind of extra attention because they, too, are at risk for leaving their chosen careers. Induction activities for these teachers may be to provide time for working with veteran teachers in similar positions.

Special considerations and induction activities are needed at the building level as well. Although most participants in this study felt personally supported by the friendships developed with other staff members and principals, some of them felt a lack of professional support. School principals, department heads, and veteran teachers need to provide professional support to teachers. The success of the new teacher should be a first priority, including adequate classroom space, technology, and teaching materials and resources. Principals need to encourage all staff members to be aware of the new teachers and to build professional relationships with them.

2a. Thoughtful building level induction activities are necessary to nurture new teachers, to know their needs, and to help them belong and succeed. The school nurse and school counselors have special roles to play in ensuring the well-being of new staff members. Others are important as listeners and supporters. Among most of the participants in this study, the friendships and relationships they formed in their schools gave them the strength to continue for as long as they

could. However, one participant traveled for almost three years between buildings. He told of his feelings as an outsider which contributed to his decision to leave teaching.

3. The leadership in the DMPS must take responsibility for protecting teachers from abuse. Several of the participants shared stories of being targets of rude and disrespectful comments, verbal abuse, and even physical abuse and assaults. Five of these twenty teachers left the DMPS because they were targets of students' violent actions. Many others reported that these kinds of conflicts and violent episodes added to their disillusionment and played a part in their decisions to leave. These teachers believed that they did not provoke this kind of disrespect and violence. Zero tolerance for violence has been established as a written policy, but it must be reformulated; made more specific; and communicated to the public, the parents, and most importantly to the students.

3a. New teachers must be told specifically what they should not tolerate in terms of disrespectful comments, verbal and physical abuse either to their students or themselves. Teaching is a developmental process. Building positive working relationships with students in order to motivate and help them learn is a difficult part of learning to teach. When students with behavior problems are allowed to

remain and disrupt the learning environment, teaching becomes even more difficult. Many of the participants acknowledged their lack of experience with management and behavior issues. Out-of-field teachers had even more unexpected situations regarding classroom management issues.

4. Leadership in the school district and individual schools must continue to find ways to show professional courtesy and appreciation to all teachers. Low salaries, despite progressive benefit packages and relative job security, continue to cause teachers to leave teaching. The DMPS and the Des Moines Education Association have worked together to provide salaries that are relatively acceptable for beginning teachers in comparison with other school districts in the state. The positive accomplishments of students and the public schools must continually be promoted so that the public will agree to raise state and local taxes high enough to provide teachers with a salary that can support a family at a middle class standard of living.

Salaries and benefits are not the only kinds of compensation, however. Schools need to make sure that meaningful events or problems in the lives of their teachers are acknowledged appropriately and support given when necessary. As new teachers are helped to deal with their disillusionment and

other difficult experiences normal for developing teachers, they will also see the support among staff members and a sense of community that is encouraging and inspiring, some of the intangible benefits and rewards of a career of service.

5. The school district must find resources so that building administrators are able to provide extra time for new teachers as a way of demonstrating professional support and respect. The workload of beginning teachers is extreme. They must get to know their subject matter and curriculum, particularly when they are out of their fields of expertise or experience. They must create a learning environment, plan classroom routines and management plans, develop units and lessons, teach them in ways that students will learn, and evaluate that learning. They must build relationships with their students, colleagues, administrators, and parents, and they must learn the culture and routines of the school. All of this takes time. After analyzing the stories of these former DMPS teachers, the actual work was not what caused teachers' problems; it was the inordinate amount of time needed to do the work satisfactorily.

Extra planning time, given all that is required of new teachers, is a worthwhile use of district resources, especially in view of the resources put forth for recruiting and induction activities. When participants in this study talked of

their disillusionment, they also combined it with stress and fatigue. Four of the married women with children in this study were not teaching because of the workload and the time it required. Seven others left as a result of career burnout.

The work and time demands added to their frustrations and fatigue.

Disillusionment, stress, and fatigue are counter to effective teaching. Giving new teachers more time to deal with the workload during their working days will reduce their burden as they move through those early difficult stages of becoming competent teachers. This may help to decrease their disillusionment with teaching and increase their motivation to work through the other normal problems of beginning teachers so that they remain in their chosen careers.

6. To help teachers who are on a path to career burnout, assessments must be made of their situations. There is always the question of “what if” when things do not go as planned. Seven of the participants in this study, as noted above, continued teaching until they reached the state of career burnout. Their initial feelings of disillusionment deepened, and as they confronted obstacle after obstacle, they wore themselves out until they gave up teaching. If out-of-field teaching is a cause, then efforts must be made to help those teachers into positions in their fields, so they will have an opportunity to experience the

teaching for which they prepared. Similarly, if teachers are simply becoming burned out by the particular grade level, subject matter, or type of student, those teachers, too, should be encouraged to make changes before giving up their careers.

When teachers move into the stage of career burnout, it is caused by the emotional impact of teaching. A priority of professional development for all teachers and particularly new teachers should be the delivery of information on the emotions associated with teaching.

Career burnout among teachers does not have to happen. These seven former DMPS teachers did not want to fail and leave. But, they were not given the knowledge and support they needed to change direction and move away from burnout. Through education and with the help of the education community, particularly if some of the additions and changes suggested above are implemented, career burnout might be avoided.

7. It is important for the district to develop ways of continuing relationships with teachers who leave and to create professional pathways back into positions in the DMPS. The loss to the school district when teachers leave is substantial. There is the loss of their experience that benefits student achievement and the

resources which were expended to recruit and develop teachers. Moreover, there are the new costs to recruit and help develop another group of new teachers. This cycle depletes the resources that could be used for programs and other district needs. Early adult life cycle changes such as marriage, the arrival of children, and the desire to explore other careers are normal in adult development. Several of the participants in this study fell victim to this result. Some of these teachers talked of returning to teaching at some future time. Will they return to DMPS? Encouraging teachers to take leaves of absences and inviting them to work as substitutes are two ways connections might be continued. Internet access and other forms of communication to keep them a part of the profession and a member of the DMPS could help ensure that if and when they do return, they might return to DMPS, and valuable resources will be regained.

For teacher education programs

As the participants reflected on their teaching experiences and teacher education programs (TEPs), they were generous in their praise of many aspects of their programs particularly in planning subject matter lessons. At the same time, regrets were voiced. The following suggestions are to help future pre-

service teachers and beginning teachers to avoid the debilitating disillusionment and other difficulties by being more prepared for the difficult realities they may face.

1. Pre-service teachers need more exposure to the wide variety and diverse kinds of teaching positions. Given that so many new teachers are offered positions which are different from their own backgrounds and experiences and which may be out of their fields in such areas as grade level, subject matter, or special education, TEPs must provide the education necessary for pre-service teachers to evaluate realistically what the available positions might entail. Disillusionment among new teachers begins when their experiences during their education programs do not prepare them for the experiences they encounter in their first teaching positions. Many of the participants in this study lamented their lack of awareness when they began teaching students who were living in poverty or neglect and students of cultural or racial backgrounds different from their own. The first priorities of TEPs must be to ensure that pre-service teachers have awareness of the differences among students and school cultures and experiences within a variety of cultural settings.

2. Preservice teachers need opportunities to develop and practice classroom management techniques, motivation, and discipline strategies in all types of settings. The difficulty in classroom management issues encountered by most of these former DMPS teachers were most probably increased by their lack of experiences in their new settings. A teacher's knowledge and skills necessary for motivating or disciplining students differs among schools and communities.

Preservice teachers deserve to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to work with classrooms in a variety of school environments and their experiences should be more realistic in terms of the work of motivating, disciplining, and helping students of all backgrounds learn. Students and schools are different according to the backgrounds of the students and the communities in which the schools are situated.

3. More education is needed for pre-service teachers concerning emotions associated with teachers and teaching. Teachers in this study believed they were unable to fairly attend to the needs of all their students. The inability to override their feelings of empathy caused stress when they knew of the difficult lives of some of their students. These feelings seemed to impact their understanding of

themselves as effective teachers. They did not expect nor were they prepared for the emotional experiences associated with teaching.

3a. Preservice teachers need an understanding of the emotions they will feel as teachers and to develop healthy, productive ways to relieve and heal these feelings. Previous studies have shown that teaching is an emotional profession (Fullan, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Lortie, 1975).

Disillusionment and stress combine with other negative emotions. These often manifest in feelings of shame and guilt when the teachers feel unable to meet students' needs. Instances of conflicts and violence are also causes of stress and negative emotion.

3b. Preservice teachers also need adequate information to understand their own personalities, their dispositions, and their tolerance levels for noise, confusion, and instances of failure. Preservice teachers need information to be able to evaluate themselves realistically in terms of teaching career viability and also the grade levels and types of student and school environment that would best match their temperaments. Career burnout has been associated with perfectionism. In the study of these twenty former teachers, I was privileged to visit fourteen of the participants' homes. I was struck by the order and attention to detail and beauty

in all of them. In many of the conversations with these participants, we talked about the problems their perfectionist tendencies caused them in their work as teachers.

4. Preservice teachers deserve an understanding that schools are similar to every institution in that they are political. This means that decisions, policies, and practices usually depend on relationships and connections among the people working within them. School environment personalities and cultures are generally witnessed in the practices, policies, and politics. Participants in this study commented that they had not understood nor been aware of the politics they would find in schools. When preservice teachers evaluate whether or not to accept a position, they must learn how to evaluate the political environment of the school.

5. Preservice teachers must develop communication skills in order to understand the cultures within school settings. They must understand that they are developing professionals in a professional career. Although the actual work of a teacher is usually in a classroom with students, there are other conditions of teachers' working life which are often dependent on professional relationships among the adults in the school and in the community surrounding the school.

6. Preservice teachers need more realistic information about the day-to-day work and life of a teacher. They need realistic information on salaries and finances.

For example, more information is needed in the area of compensation. It is generally known that the salary of a teacher begins lower and stays lower than most other professions. On the other hand, there are usually progressive benefit packages in terms of insurance, vacation and sick days, and so forth. In normal economic times, job security is another benefit. Moreover, there are usually ways to earn extra compensation through coaching, teaching summer school classes, or other professionally related activities. Many teachers—men and women with families and single people—have managed to learn to live within a budget that a teacher's salary provides.

7. Preservice teachers need to know that after hours planning and student assessment are the norm for most teachers. The demands on teachers continue to increase (Hargreaves, 1994). Teachers often put in many extra hours beyond the normal work day.

7a. Preservice teachers need to know and understand that teachers have the responsibility to work with students in their classrooms, but also a responsibility to work with other activities in their schools to provide all kinds of learning

opportunities for students. Along with their regular lesson planning and grading papers, this might include attending and/or assisting at athletic events, concerts, and other activities that make an effective school.

8. Preservice teachers need more information on the joys of teaching from effective veteran teachers who are able to share experiences, problems, and solutions. If people are motivated to consider teaching, then more information from those who were also motivated to continue teaching may gently displace some of the illusions and simultaneously inspire these future teachers.

Recommendations for Further Research

As a result of listening to the often distressing and disheartening stories of these former teachers, many more questions emerged for discussion and study. Where were any interventions to help these once motivated and committed teachers to move through their disillusionment, regain their balance, and their desire to teach? Where were their administrators? Where were their colleagues? Did no one notice as many of them became mentally, physically, and emotionally exhausted? But, what if someone had noticed? Does the district have interventions to help people who seem to be moving into a downward spiral to career abandonment? Are building administrators, school nurses, and counselors

educated in the symptoms of career burnout and given the authority to offer help? If exhausted teachers are in positions out of their areas of experience, are there procedures to help them transfer into positions in their areas where they might regain their motivation and the energy to continue to teach? Formal research into these questions may not be warranted. However, these questions would begin productive conversations among board members, administrators, and teachers as they consider changes to help retain teachers.

Formal research is recommended for the following areas.

1. Further research is needed into the emotional impact of teaching on teachers.

The emotions associated with disillusionment are of particular importance for further study since disillusionment appears to be a forerunner to dissatisfaction with teaching and career abandonment.

2. Further study is needed regarding teachers' disillusionment and stress caused by the inability to give a fair amount of time and attention to all students. Is this a normal situation in classrooms? To what extent does it factor into teachers' classroom management difficulties? To what extent is it a factor into teachers' reasons for leaving teaching?

3. Qualitative research is needed to study effective, veteran teachers. Teachers who remain in the classroom and continue to be motivated and committed to teaching have been able to work through disillusionment and other problems of beginning teachers. From their stories and experiences, information may emerge that will give new insights into ways of helping new teachers move more smoothly through the disillusionment, the emotions, and other normal problems and developmental stages necessary in becoming successful teachers.
4. Further research is warranted into personality, perfectionism, and other personal characteristics which may be associated with teacher attrition or retention. More information in personalities and characteristics associated with effective teachers will be helpful for teacher education programs in their screening and admitting practices. This information will also be useful for induction programs as they aid developing teachers.
5. A comprehensive review of the literature is needed on induction and mentoring programs that have been demonstrated to be successful in helping retain teachers. Further, longitudinal studies on new induction and mentoring programs need to be conducted and designed to demonstrate whether or not they are effective in retaining teachers.

6. There are three areas of research suggestions for the Des Moines Public School district. First, a survey is needed to ascertain the number and kinds of disrespectful comments, verbal abuse and assaults, and physical abuse and assaults which are perpetrated on teachers by students and/or their parents. This information will help the district's leaders make decisions on what is needed to strengthen the zero tolerance for violence policy. Second, a survey is needed to determine a close approximation of the amount of hours teachers work outside the required hours of the school day, including school activities and education coursework. This information will be helpful in determining the real needs of teachers when decisions are made in the school calendar that affect the use of teachers' time. Third, research into ongoing problems of teachers leaving their profession needs to continue. This information will aid the district in making improvements where needed and in retaining their most valuable resources: their experienced teachers.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Permission Letter from the Des Moines Public Schools

Des Moines Independent Community School District
Department of School Improvement & Employee Relations
1800 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, IA 50309-3399

February 21, 1999

TO: Diane M. Crozier
East High School
815 E. 13th Street
Des Moines, IA 50316

RE: Research Project

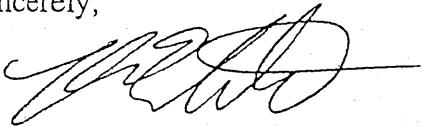
The materials that you submitted for your pilot study on teacher attrition has been reviewed. As long as you are utilizing public documents (e.g., Board meeting agendas and minutes) to identify your subject pool, your study does not need to be reviewed. Since the adult subjects you seek are no longer affiliated with the district, they are beyond our jurisdiction. And since you have already arranged with our principal that you would be working on your study on your own time, the issue of assigned duties is also covered. At this point, you may proceed without any involvement of the District Research Review Board.

For your benefit, I did review your materials. I suggest that you might wish to change the first sentence of paragraph 4 of your consent form to read, "Please feel free to ask any questions you have about this pilot study either before participating or during the interview." It may say the same thing our current copy says, but it might be a bit more "approachable."

If you proceed with your formal study using the same method to identify your subject pool, there will be no need to submit a request through the Research Review Board. It would be good, however, to let me know that you are doing it, in case I get a phone call. Also, as you proceed, I would be happy to review any consent forms or documents, if you would like additional feedback.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 242-7639.

Sincerely,



Mr. Thomas E. Deeter
Chair, District Research Review Board

APPENDIX B
Human Subjects Review and Consent Forms

To be completed by the Investigator:

Date Submitted: June 1, 2000

Proposal Title: If I TELL THEM, Will They Listen? Voices of Former Teachers

Investigator: Diane M. Crozier Telephone 515-263-9672

Faculty advisor: (for student research): Pamela M. Curtis Dept. Education

Return to: Diane M. Crozier
Name

4896 NE. 23rd Ave.
Street Address of Campus Office

Des Moines, IA 50317
City, State, Zip (if off campus)

To be completed by the Human Subjects Research Review Committee Chair:

Date received: June 8, 2000

Decision:

_____ Approval, no risk

X _____ Approval, minimal risk

_____ Approval, subjects at risk, but benefits outweigh risks

_____ No approval. Subjects at risk or proposal does not adequately address risks, benefits or procedures.

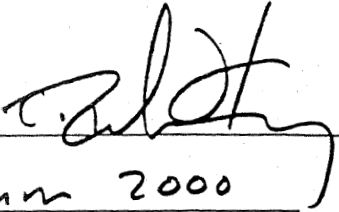
Reasons for Disapproval: _____

Suggested Changes: Revise consent form;

• Recognize participants' fears; and
receive consent prior to telephone
interviews.

HSRR: 6/1/99

HSRRC Chair: _____



Date: 19 Jun 2000

Final Notification Form

Consent Form

If I Tell Them, Will they Listen? Voices of Former Teachers

The following information is provided for you to decide whether or not you wish to participate in the present study. Please be aware that you are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time. This study is the basis for my dissertation, a requirement for my Doctor of Education Degree at Drake University. I am a teacher at Des Moines East High School, and although I am conducting this study with its knowledge, this is not a study by or for the Des Moines Independent School District.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the experiences of teachers who begin their teaching careers, but choose to leave teaching within the first seven years for another career or profession unrelated to early childhood or K-12 public or private education. For this study, the procedure will be a grounded theory study with twenty to thirty participants. Experiences will be generally defined as the perceptions of teachers and the meaning given to them.

Data collection will involve initial screening telephone interviews, one hour personal taped interviews, and field notes. The transcriptions from these interviews and the field notes will become the data for analysis. The only individuals involved will be myself and the participants in separate interview settings. Data will be destroyed at the end of two years.

Please feel free to ask any questions you have about this study either before participating or during the interview. I will share the findings with you before the study is completed and after it is finalized. Please be assured your name will not be a part of the study, and your identity will not be known except by the researcher.

There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study.

The expected benefit associated with your participation is the information about the experiences of teachers in the first years of the profession.

Please sign your consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. A copy of this consent form will be given to you to keep.

Signature of Participant

Date

Witness

Date

Diane M. Crozier, Principal Investigator 515-~~263-9672~~ 271-0667
Dr. Pamela Curtiss, Professor of Education, Drake University 515-271-2599

APPENDIX C
Introductory Telephone Protocol

Introductory Telephone Protocol

Introduction: My name is Diane Crozier, and I am doing graduate work at Drake University. I am also a teacher at Des Moines East High School. I acquired your name through the public records of wither the Iowa Department of Education or the Des Moines School Board. I understand that you are a former Des Moines teacher.

I am interested in the experiences of former teachers who have taught for seven years or less and who have gone on to other career fields or professions.

Questionnaire Form:

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Are you working in the field of education at this time?

Do you plan to return to teaching?

The records that I have show that you taught for _____ years. Is that correct?

Are you working outside the field of education?

Attending college?

Homemaking?

Would you be willing to be interviewed about your experience n education?

Thank you very much. I will send a letter and consent form than explains in more detail this study. I will call about a time and place for the interview.

Appropriate Exit.

APPENDIX D
Introductory Letter

Introductory Letter

Dear _____:

I am conducting a study of the experiences of former classroom teachers of the Des Moines Public Schools. I acquired your name from the public records of either the Iowa Department of Education or the Des Moines School Board. This research is in conjunction with my doctoral work at Drake University.

I am a full time teacher in the Des Moines Public Schools where I have taught English for twenty-four years, currently at East High School. Although the school district is aware of my study, this is not a study by or for the Des Moines Public School District.

The purpose of my study is to gain information about the experiences of former teachers with seven or less years of experience who have chosen to leave the field of education for another career or profession. I am contacting people who fit this criteria according to available records. I would like to interview willing participants. The interview would be at your convenience, both time and place. It would take approximately one hour. I will be calling you to discuss the possibility of your participation.

I look forward to talking with you.

Sincerely,

Diane Crozier

APPENDIX E
Matrix

PARTICIPANT, STATUS, AGES WHILE TEACHING	INFLUENCE TO TEACH, TIME OF DECISION	STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE(S), EVALUATION	CERTIFICATION AREA(S)	DMPS POSITION(S), NUMBER OF YEARS	PRE-TEACHING EXPERIENCES	REASON(S) LEAVING TEACHING, POST-TEACHING SITUATION	GAP AREA(S) BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND POSITION
ROBERT Married, grown children, late 40s	Personal experience 2 nd career, renewed license	(No information)	Secondary, Art, Social Studies (minor)	Varied- Remedial Lab, MS (Study skills, math, language arts, social studies) 2 1/2 years	Teaching (2 years), Military, Business area, Substitute-DMPS Associate-DMPS	Lack of respect/support Education related	Content Diversity
GREG Single, late 30s	Personal experience 2 nd career, returned to college	City elementary, 5 th grade, difficult City elementary, 2 nd grade, positive	Elementary, Special Education, multi-category, Behavior disorders	Special School Upper Elementary, Middle school, self-contained, 3.6 Sp. Ed. classroom 2 years	Food Service, Dietary manager	Career burnout Working in rehabilitation program	Grade level No experience with self- contained 3.6 BD
CONNOR Married, 1 child late 20s-early 30s	Family in education 2 nd career, returned to college	City H. S., upper level social studies, positive	Secondary, Political Science, History	City H. S. Social Studies 2 1/2 years	State government, Coach YMCA, Long term substitute-DMPS	State government opportunity	No gap
ANNA Single, early 20s-mid 20s	Family in education Decision before college	City H. S., foreign language, positive	Secondary, Foreign Language	City H. S. Foreign Language 3 years	Summer work in third world impoverished communities	Opportunity for further education in a 2 nd career	No gap

PARTICIPANT, STATUS, AGES WHILE TEACHING	INFLUENCE TO TEACH, TIME OF DECISION	STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE(S), EVALUATION	CERTIFICATION AREA(S)	DMPS POSITION(S), NUMBER OF YEARS	PRE-TEACHING EXPERIENCES	REASON(S) LEAVING TEACHING, POST-TEACHING SITUATION	GAP AREA(S) BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND POSITION
DOROTHY Married, planning a family, mid 20s	Personal experience Decision before college	Suburban elementary, Special Education Resource room, positive	Elementary, Special Education (minor)	Inner-city Elementary, Self-contained Special Ed. classroom 3 years	Hy-Vee part- time, Substitute-DMPS	Career burnout Business	Socioeconomic diversity
JANET Married, 3 children, mid 20s-early 30s	Personal experience Decision before college	Small town elementary, 2 general education classrooms, partially negative	Elementary	City elementary, General Ed. classrooms, 6 years	Substitute-DMPS (2 years)	Violence Work load and time Homemaking, Part-time with husband's business	No gap
JEFF Married, 1 child, late 20s	Family in teaching 2 nd career, returned to college	DMPS H. S., Biology, positive	Secondary, Science	Inner-city middle school, 8 th grade science 4 months	Worked in business	Salary Computer business	Grade level Socioeconomic diversity
ALLEN Single, mid 20s	Family in teaching Fall-back decision while in college	Rural H. S., Foreign language, not helpful	Secondary, Foreign language	City H. S., Foreign language	Camp counselor Substitute- suburban H. S.	Career burnout Undecided	Socioeconomic diversity

PARTICIPANT, STATUS, AGES WHILE TEACHING	INFLUENCE TO TEACH, TIME OF DECISION	STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE(S), EVALUATION	CERTIFICATION AREA(S)	DMPS POSITION(S), NUMBER OF YEARS	PRE-TEACHING EXPERIENCES	REASON(S) LEAVING TEACHING, POST-TEACHING SITUATION	GAP AREA(S) BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND POSITION
TERRANCE Married, 2 children, late 20s-early 30s	Family in teaching 2 nd career, returned to college	City elementary, positive Middle school Physical Education, negative	K-12 Physical Education	City elementary, 7 years	Sports Medicine	Salary UPS Management	No gap
JIM Married, 2 children, early 30s	Family in teaching 2 nd career, decision in college	City H. S., AP Psychology, positive	Secondary, Psychology, Math (minor)	Inner-city middle school, 8 th grade science, 4 years	Child Abuse Investigator	Violence Technology Business	Content Level Socioeconomic diversity
BARBARA Married, 1 child, expecting, early 20s	Family in teaching Decision before college	Inner-city elementary, positive	Early childhood Elementary	City elementary, 3 years	(No information)	Violence Workload and time Homemaking	No gap
JUDY Married, one child late 20s	Family in teaching Decision before college	City H. S. , Foreign Language, positive	Secondary, Foreign Language, ESL (minor)	City middle school, ESL & Foreign Language 2 years	Waitress, Teacher (2 years) in a rural area	Violence Homemaking	Socioeconomic diversity

PARTICIPANT, STATUS, AGES WHILE TEACHING	INFLUENCE TO TEACH, TIME OF DECISION	STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE(S), EVALUATION	CERTIFICATION AREA(S)	DMPS POSITION(S), NUMBER OF YEARS	PRE-TEACHING EXPERIENCES	REASON(S) LEAVING TEACHING, POST-TEACHING SITUATION	GAP AREA(S) BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND POSITION
TODD Married, 1 child, late 20s-early 30s	Family in teaching Decision before college	Rural H. S., positive	Secondary, Social Studies, earned Special Ed. endorsement while teaching	Special middle school, Self- contained 3.6 BD Special Ed. classroom 6 years	1 year teaching in city H. S., 5 years associate, substitute-DMPS	Career burnout Business	No certification in Special Ed. Content Socioeconomic diversity
LINDA Married, 1 child, late 20s-early 30s	Personal experience 2 nd career, Decision before college	Private suburban elementary, positive	Elementary Education, earned Special Ed. endorsement while teaching	Special middle school, Self- contained 3.6 BD Special Ed. classroom 5 years	Work in mental health area	Career burnout Homemaking, At-home tutoring franchise business	No certification in Special Ed. Socioeconomic diversity
RON Married, late 20s	Family in teaching Fall-back decision while in college	City H. S., Foreign Language, negative	Secondary, Foreign Language	City middle school, Foreign languages (his certified language only part-time) 4 1/2 years	Camp counselor, Substitute-DMPS 2 years	Salary Moving Business	Content Grade level
SALLY Married, 3 children late 20s	Personal experience Decision while in college	Suburban elementary, positive	Elementary Education, Math Earned MA in curriculum and reading instruction while teaching	City elementary, 2 years, part-time 1 year	Teaching in another city, Substitute	Workload and time Homemaking	No gap

PARTICIPANT, STATUS, AGES WHILE TEACHING	INFLUENCE TO TEACH, TIME OF DECISION	STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE(S), EVALUATION	CERTIFICATION AREA(S)	DMPS POSITION(S), NUMBER OF YEARS	PRE-TEACHING EXPERIENCES	REASON(S) LEAVING TEACHING, POST-TEACHING SITUATION	GAP AREA(S) BETWEEN EXPERIENCE AND POSITION
PATTY Married, 1 child late 20s	Family in teaching Decision before college	City H. S. and middle school, English, positive	Secondary, English	City H. S., English 2 years part-time, 1 year full-time	Substitute and associate-DMPS, 3 years	Workload and time Homemaking	Socioeconomic diversity
RICHARD Married, 1 child, late 20s-early 30s	Personal experience 2 nd career, Returned to college	City H. S., Upper level math, positive	Secondary, Math	City H. S., low-level math 2 years	Military Instructor	Career burnout Business	Grade level Socioeconomic diversity
KAREN Married, mid 20s	Personal experience Decision before college	Elementary-city school and abroad, Special Education, Physically impaired, positive	Elementary, Special Education, Physically impaired (5 year Masters program)	Inner-city elementary, 2 years	Camp Counselor	Career burnout Rehabilitation Program	Socioeconomic diversity
SHARON Single, 1 child, late 20s	Personal experience 2 nd career, Returned to college	Suburban elementary, Special Education, Resource Room, positive	Elementary, Learning Disabilities and Mental Disabilities (K-6)	City M. S., 7 th grade Special Ed. Resource room, 1 year City elementary, SKIN classroom, 3 rd -5 th grades, 1 year	Medical Secretary, Dental Assistant	Career burnout Business	Grade level Socioeconomic diversity

APPENDIX F

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol
If I Tell Them, Will They Listen? Voices of Former Teachers

Date _____ Time _____ Place _____

Participant _____

Demographics: Gender _____ Age _____ Age of Entry _____

Position(s) in Des Moines School District _____ # of years _____

Level _____ Qualified for Position _____

Classroom or Special Education _____

The following questions and probes will guide the interview.

Biographical Information: Background, Current Position, Length of Position(s), etc.

Tell me about your teacher preparation program.

Tell me about your teaching experience.

What was your day like?

Did you have support?

Buddy or mentor?

Administration?

The system?

When did you start thinking about leaving teaching?

What prompted your thinking?

Students?

School's problems?

Quality of your life? Homework? Salary?

How did you make your decision?

Reaction of others?

Your feelings?

How would you describe the difference between your work then and now?

Is there anything else that you feel would be valuable for me to know?

Please call if anything else comes to mind, and I may call on you also as I work with this topic.